Arun Joshi’s the Sahitya Akademi Award winning novel, The Last Labyrinth in 1982, imbibes various dimensions of human activities such as the idea of mysticism, miracle, faith in God, Eastern and Western philosophy, human dilemma, cultural conflicts, dream, problem of identity, fear, dread, individual frustration, dissatisfaction with the world, freedom anxiety and so on. The novel unfolds the themes of futility and hollowness of civilized society, and marks the culminating point in Joshi’s inspection of human realities. Like his earlier novels, the present novel is also passes through various phases of individual personality and raises the relevant questions like issue of God’s existence and man’s identity in this multifaceted world. As today, men’s problem of alienation is divided into two parts- self-alienation and social alienation. Hence, the novel unfolds self-alienation of Som Bhaskar that western existential philosophers staunchly hold up. In respect to this concept Joshi’s almost every protagonist suffers from self-alienation that both Indian and the western philosophy have covered it. Self-alienation is a psychological than social. The protagonist of the present novel suffers from psychological problems. Joshi establishes his dignity after pen down this award-winning novel in which he goes on looking the spiritual approach, in subtle outlook to individual existence. He tries to draw people’s attention toward Indian philosophy of relationship between soul and God. He unfolds Indian ethos and holds up a mirror for the people to witness the hollowness of modern man.
Like his previous novels, the current novel also deals with interrogative mood that remains throughout the novel. Words like perhaps, probably, chance and doubt recur throughout the novel. It indicates that in the modern world, nothing is sure and certain, people are living in doubt, hollowness, dread, dilemma and meaningless existence. Like Hamlet, the novel is also the study of particular state of mind in which one can see the conflict between reason and emotion, love and lust, curiosity and distrust, dream and reality and especially focuses on the ‘self’. In the race of life, modern men are looking stranger both from their inner and outer world. Shankar Kumar cites T.S. Eliot’s opinion, “So far as we are here what we do must be either evil or good; so far as we do evil or good, we are human; and it is better, in paradoxical way, to do evil than to do nothing; at least we exist. It is true to say that his glory is capacity for salvation; it is also true to say that his glory is his capacity for damnation’ (Kumar 42).

Joshi uses narrative technique in the novel. It has been divided into three parts consisting nineteen chapters. The narrator of the novel is himself the protagonist while unlike The Apprentice the listener in it sometimes plays active role. Joshi probes a conflict between human values and feudal possessive conduct in the novel. The title of the novel, itself holds significant meaning in which the terms ‘labyrinth’ and ‘maze’ signify incomprehensible mystery of life and the world that Franz Kafka exposes in his novels The Trial and Metamorphosis. The term ‘labyrinth’ is defined as a complex prison built by Daedalus for king Minos. It is still famous today all over the world, which is very much akin to the present novel where Lal Haveli in Benaras, exposes a strange construction where one sees roads that fork, corridors that lead nowhere, except to other corridors. The Argentine magic realist, Jorge Luis Burgos
also explains the term ‘Labyrinth’ that denotes the enigmas of life, the universe as well as of the human mind. Tapan Kumar Ghosh quotes Burgos remarks, “The world is a book and the book is a world, and both are labyrinthine and enclose enigmas designed to be understood and participated in by man” (Ghosh 120). The title of the novel is itself explicable as the death, which is even more mysterious than its appearance. The story of the novel moves around its central character Som Bhaskar, a narrator-hero, is almost confused person, living in the world of dream and always unsatisfied with his internal present condition. Mukteshwar Pandey remarks about the novel:

It exhibits the confluence of the existentialist anxiety as exemplified in The Foreigner the ‘Karmik’ principles of ‘detachment’ and ‘action’ on the pattern of Bhagavadgita as shown in The Apprentice, and ceaseless longing for the essence of life being observed with a latent quest for ‘a great force, urkraft’ as observed in The Case of Billy Biswas. Thus, the confluence in the ‘Triveni’ in the form of the mystical urge of Som Bhaskar is presented in his incessant longing for the vitals of life and existence. (113)

The setting of the novel takes place in Mumbai, Delhi, and Benaras, but the novel opens at the coast of Goa with its angry stance of Som. As it appears with its first line of the novel, “Above all, I have a score to settle. I forgot nothing, forgive no one” (The Last Labyrinth 07). The line probably refers to the revengeful objective of the protagonist who wants to grab an inefficient plastic manufacturing company of Aftab. Som tells the story of his life to Dr. Kashyap, known as K. He is his family
doctor who actively interacts with him throughout the novel. The novel is tale of two cities Mumbai and Benaras represented respectively as Som and Aftab. It discloses the turbulent inner world of an industrialist, for whom life seems a labyrinth and a complicated maze. Som is a son of a millionaire who like other first two protagonists of Joshi’s novels gets education from the western universities. Hence, he looks the fusion of both the Eastern and Western cultures. He is rational, scientific, intelligent and egoist person, nevertheless form beginning of his life, he lives in the grip of insomnia. Like the title of novel, the name of the protagonist ‘Som Bhaskar’ also contains its meaning. The term ‘Som’ refers sensuous pleasure and ‘Bhaskar’ stands for the light of faith, therefore he is tied in bondage of desire.

Som shares his feelings with K., saying how at the age of twenty-five with his father’s death, he has to run his plastic industry in a very gloomy and melancholic mood. Even just after three months he has to get marry, a girl, named, Geeta and later on he becomes the father of two handsome children. His congenial life goes on until the age of thirty-five. However, he often looks very disturb and unsatisfied with himself. He has great interest in philosophy that he expresses, “I knew of Krishna; of the lines he had spoken: of Buddha at Sarnath, under the full moon of July, setting in motion the wheel of Righteousness; of Pascal, on whom I did a paper at Howard . . . . If you gain, you gain all, if you lose, you lose nothing” (LL 9). But nothing satisfies his desire because his soul always cries for one thing, “I want, I want, I want” (LL 9). It always pinches his heart and minds therefore, his life move forward on the backdrop of problems, rootless, meaningless, and hollow. He tells K., “Through the light of my days and the bleakness of my nights and the disquiet of those sleepless hours beside my wife, within reach of the tranquillisers, I had sung the same strident
song: I want, I want, I want, I want” (*LL* 09). His undefined hunger reminds Saul Bellow’s Henderson, which later on takes him from Mumbai to Benares where he confronts with narrow and dirty lanes dancing girls and a mystical aura.

Som’s problem is connected with his heart that has nothing to do with any social, political, and religious issues. He has desire to know the secrecy of life for which his soul always calls to come out from the materialistic world. His problem is most probably psychological. Often he loses the control of his mind as well as in his inner turmoil. He spends sleepless night thinking and perceiving over his desire. He says to K., “I have become a nuisance . . . From midnight till there I sit and moon. If I believed in God I could pray, may be run a rosary through my fingers” (*LL* 08). He, too, like Billy Biswas, is stubborn, self-willed, harsh and driven by inner furies. He has an appetite to know what his heart wants. Emptiness, hollowness, and empty spaces were eating his conscience and desire therefore most of the time he looks an uprooted young man without power. He tells K., “It is the voids of the world, more than its objects that bother me. The voids and empty spaces, within and without...Voids of caves and voids of sky; the terrible vacancies of lokalok” (*LL* 42). After his mother’s death, everything appears to him meaningless, barren and alone in the world. He looks like a tree without root where he finds himself very weak to confront the reality of life.

Desolation and negation of life, however, hovers over him since his childhood that is why often his soul cries for something to feel and get which he even does not recognise. He tells K., “It was the voids and not the guava groves that I had walked through that morning my mother died; and voids too in her room in Bombay; and
voids in each time an affair ended; and the morning my daughter was born; and on and on. Voids all” (*LL* 43). In case of his voids and hollowness, Arvind M. Nawale cites V.V.V. Rajendra Prasad opinion, “Som’s “voids” are not unreal. He seems to comprehend life only in terms of alienation, aridity of feeling, and a sense of inner frustration” (46). He passes luxurious life in the metropolitan city like Mumbai where nothing seems him permanent and eternal. Often his conscience calls him to come out from this muddy materialistic life where people have no time to peep in their heart. His suppressed desire finds no way or situation until he meets Anuradha. While speaking on alienation and loneliness, he tells K., “I felt as though struck by thunder, bled totally of all energy. Inside me, there was nothing an empty roaring, like a roar of the sea in a conch. It slowly dawned upon me that I enjoyed staying in bed. I kept the discovery to myself lest it should start a new chain of enquiries” (*LL*105).

However, the influence of existential philosophers cannot be denied from Joshi’s novel especially *The Last Labyrinth* that unfolds Kierkegaard’s absurd belief in Christianity and Nietzsche’s atheistic outlook in the leading figure of Som. Like Nietzsche, he also believes that man achieves anything in his life through his will power. His emphatic conception on will keeps him away from the existence of God. Like existentialists ideology, Joshi’s current novel is an embodiment of man’s problems of anxiety, alienation, dread, and identity of his existence. Joshi also remained in touch with Indian philosophy that opens the gate of hope and peaceful life for his protagonists as soon as they pick up the string of faith and belief. His novels are character-based. They have nothing to do with social and situational loom.
The protagonist of *The Last Labyrinth*, Som is a fusion of two conflicting human faculties: instinct and reason. He inherits all the rational approach from his father and his study that he uses during taking any resolution. Since he knew that his father was obsessed with the ‘cause and effect theory’, therefore he also tried to follow his path. Once during his visit to Eliphanta, his father states, “You know, I have been wondering about causes, causes of things that happen to men, to object” (*LL* 20). The belief in the rational theory of cause and effect establishes its room in him, so he becomes a person that believes only in proof. His objective and rational viewpoint in each steps of life does not leave any opportunity for him to hear his inner voice. His father once directly says to K., “I believe in science, yes, but science cannot solve the problem of the causes. Not many realise this paradox” (*LL* 23).

Som’s father believed that life was the expression of will, but he was not sure whether it was his will or the will of the First cause. However, he believed that it would not have any contact with divine power because his rational-analytic mind did not allow him to connect his will with something, which would be unapproved. In fact, he was an ardent admirer of Darwin’s principle of “the survival of fittest” and several times went through his *Origin of Species* (1859). Som also studies inadequately Darwin’s theory of evolution of man in is higher study that leaves revolutionary changes in his mind set. On the contrary, his mother had absurd belief in God. She was very emotional woman who used to hate scientific and materialistic development of the society.

Like Som his own father also raises several times the question of God’s existence, “Who knows the truth? Who can tell where and how arose the universe. The gods are later than its beginning who knows, therefore, whence these creations
come. Only that God who sees in highest heaven; He only knows whence came this universe. He only knows. Or, perhaps, He knows not” (*LL* 142). Consequently, father’s agonistic belief works over him so he also starts thinking like his father. This became ruthless when he sees his mother’s death who had firm belief on lord Krishna that He would cure her. He once tells Anuradha, “The God, my mother believed Krishna would cure her and flushed her capsules down the toilet. Krishna sat on top of her bureau and smiled and smiled, and smitten until she was dead” (*LL* 51). Thus Som is tossed between the rationality of his father and spirituality of his mother who later on engrossed by father’s vision. The ideology of his parents were almost different to each other one believed in theistic existential point of view other atheistic.

Som’s life takes a new shape at the age of thirty-five when he joins a meeting of Manufacturers Association in New Delhi at an international hotel where he at first time meets Anuradha. However, in his whole life, he encounters with various girls like Gita, Gargi, Maya, Leela Sabnish, Azizun but Anuradha is the first woman who looks him very strange and beautiful. Leaving behind the purpose of meeting, he fully concentrates himself looking on Anuradha. He admits to K., “I had come only to talk of business. I was in hurry. I was always in hurry then, like a hare chased by unseen hounds. I had noticed Anuradha like one notices a monuments; tall, handsome, ruined” (*LL* 10). He is bewitched by her physical beauty therefore on the invitation of Aftab he very enthusiastically at the first time visits Banaras only to meet her in spite of business purpose. So far her nature is concerned she is a woman of obscure origin of the middle age. She is very intelligent, soft, gentle, and good-looking woman who had already confronted bitter experiences of life, and suffered a lot. Playing the active role in the novel *K.* tells Som about her life that she was born in Bihar and her aunt
brought her Bombay after her mother’s death where she went under a great-humiliated life. She was an illegitimate child of the insane mother whose profession was dancing. Even like Som’s mother, she also had absurd belief in Lord Krishna. She was strange woman who did not get marry in her whole life. As she believed that, she had already married lord Krishna. With the death of her mother, Anuradha’s life becomes painful, absurd and meaningless and has to face murder, deceiving, molestation, exploitation and all the evil experiences of life. She is a woman of obscure origin, and K. knew her suffering of life that he says to Som, “You know, Som, my life had been spent amidst misery and suffering but I know of no other human being who suffered as much as Anuradha” (LL 175). He further tells how she was taken from Mumbai by Aftab who gave shelter her in his house. A little bit happiness touches her feet as soon as she meets Gargi, a symbol of spirituality.

The present novel is much more discussed than the other novels of Joshi, whose most important theme is ‘faith’. Faith in God, in life, in miracle, in love, marriage, relationship is the fundamental analysis of Joshi’s tendency to judge human nature. Before meeting Gargi, Anuradha’s life was greatly disturbed by fear, hopelessness, and humiliation where she does not find any way to come out from this mess of life. Nevertheless, she pines for the flam of spiritual ideas, peace, light, and knowledge in her whole life. Her crucial personal experience of life makes her strong to face the reality of life. All her speeches contain heavy thought and reality of life therefore she is believed an amalgam of antiquity and modernity, holiness and adultery, suffering and faith and rational and irrational body. As T.K. Ghosh writes, “She represents the life-spirit in women, the Feminine Principle to the Sankhya system of Indian Philosophy” (LL 133). In her very first glance, Gargi comes to know
that Som really loves Anuradha and is ready to leave everything for her. Therefore, in a conversation with Som, she says, “She is your Shakti” (LL 21). Som’s motive of life is changed as soon as she comes in his life that reminds Joshi’s second novel *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas*, where Bilasia, a tribal girl becomes the Shakti and motto of Billy’s life. Billy’s curiosity and desire are fulfilled when he finds Bilasia as a queen of his life. T. K. Ghosh again cites Heinrich Zimmer’s opinion in his book:

In Shaktism or Tantrism, Shakti is personified as the world-protecting, feminine, material side of the ultimate being and as such, stands for the spontaneous, loving acceptance of life’s tangible reality. Enduring the suffering, sacrifice, death and bereavements that attend all experience of the transitory, she . . . represents . . . the delirium of the manifested forms . . . . From this point of view of the masculine principle of the spirit (which is the quest of the enduring, eternally valid and absolutely divine) she is the pre-eminent enigma. (*LL* 133)

Joshi’s characterization of female characters in the present novel is very much dominant than male figures. They appear stronger than men i.e. Anuradha holds all the answers of the perplexing questions of Som. She very easily recognises Som’s problem and desire and looks very mysterious character that Som recognises while telling to K., “She was almost like the ocean; one could never reach the bottom of her” (*LL* 121). Further she confides K., “There was more to her than met the eye. A world spinning all by itself. I was infatuated with mysterious world” (*LL* 175). Som’s doubt, mystery and desire come on the verge of its fulfilment and clearance when Anuradha shows him a way. He already knew that his desire and hunger would never
be solved by anyone except one who could recognise his internal feeling and emotion. He tells K.:

You know . . . for many years now, I have had this awful feeling that I wanted something. But the sad thing was it didn’t make the slightest difference when I managed to get what I had wanted. My hunger was just as bad as ever. A year ago, I couldn’t imagine a wish, which if fulfilled, would have made the least difference to my life. You know all this. Then came Anuradha. It could be that she made an impression on me because she was so different from women I had known. (LL 174-175)

The next girl comes in his life is Geeta. She is very beautiful, intelligent, trustworthy and lovable woman who devotes her whole life for him. Her role in the novel is very much passive. However, she knows the relationship of Som and Anuradha and his visit to Benares for that purpose yet she never stops him even jealousy also does not take place in her. Som praises Geeta’s courage to face the reality of life that he tells K., “Geeta, of course, is a great, big river herself. As big as they come, between Anuradha and her it must have been love at first sight. If discontent is my trademark, trust is Geeta’s. She is an intelligent person, sophisticated, aware of the pitfalls of the world” (LL 56-57). Of course, marriage is based on trust that Geeta possesses. According to social belief marriage is confluence of two souls, two life, two understanding, that appear in the relationship between Som and Geeta. Like Meena, wife of Billy, Geeta also fails to know desire and voice of
Som’s soul. Here Joshi probably tries to capture the attention of the readers that marriage is not the solution of Som’s quest for life.

The next girl encounters with Som in the novel is Dr. Leela Sabnis, a professor of Philosophy. She struggles for the women’s empowerment and their emancipation in the society. She is a polyglot, who has great knowledge of multiple languages such as Marathi, Sanskrit, French, German, English, Hindi and Tamil. In his very first visit to her home, Som finds her as if her house is full of books and shocks when he comes to know that her husband left her because she was bibliophile. Leela also tries to know the problem of Som and explains him by convincing, “What can you do with mysticism? Take it or leave it. What good is a doctrine that says: take me or leave me, do not analyse me. It is Descartes that you need to understand, Som Bhaskar” (LL 71). In a short span of time, she judges his problem, and says, “You are much too high strung. Without reason you are a neurotic. A compulsive fornicator” (LL 72). Som frankly spells out that he had made his life like a playing game. There is no one around him who could pay attention on the voice his soul that is why he finds himself often anchorless, and rootless person. He confesses, “Wondering, curious, analysing, correlating, and getting nowhere. She tried to help me reason things through but I go nowhere. And when you go nowhere you get vengeful, angry, all the more querulous with that someone who put on the planet in the first place” (LL 73). Although he was millionaire yet fights for pining the individual identity in the society. Like a modern youth, he always lives in dilemma, confusion, disillusionment and frustration. Joshi himself writes in a letter to V. Gopal Reddy, which Shankar Kumar quotes in his book, “Alienation of my novels which I have written so far, ultimately leads them
back to community. I realize that in my latest novel *The Last Labyrinth* for the first time it does not happen” (89).

Gargi is a unique creation of Joshi. She is a symbol of mystery, miracle, faith, and grace. She is a radiant and rosy woman of forty with charming delicate, religious outlook who is daughter of a ‘Sufi’ once lived with Aftab’s father. Although she is deaf and dumb yet has unique power of understanding and judging anyone on his/her lips movement. She communicates through signs, gestures and writing. Som comes across with her for the first time in Benaras where she dwells in a cottage on the verge of the Ganga. Her smiling and humorous look enamours Som’s heart where he feels very easy and comfortable. Cancelling the foreign visit with Geeta he often visits to her cottage to know and solve his problem of restlessness of life, therefore once in a visit there he asks her, “I am fed up of this restlessness. I shot out suddenly. So absolutely fed up. Can you help me?” (*LL* 107). On his request, Gargi looks at him politely and takes out a pad and writes, “God will send someone to help you . . . Someone who has known suffering” (*LL* 107). She already knew that Anuradha is only girl who already went through the suffering of life could help him. Gargi’s standpoint reminds both the genesis of Eastern and Western philosophy. Since Jesus Christ believed that suffering and scarification are made for the welfare of humanity.

Joshi’s present novel is very much mystic, philosophical and psychological than earlier three novels and all of them are based on the searching of individual identity. Since the whole novel roams around Mumbai and Benares therefore, both the cities have their own symbols. As Mumbai is symbol of science, business, materialism, doubt, dilemma, anxiety while Benares symbolises mystery, miracle,
labyrinth, and Shakti. Like cities the novel is also portrayal of two groups of people as Som, Geeta from Mumbai symbolises rational attitude and Aftab, and Anuradha from Benaras symbolise emotional mystic outlook. In Benares Aftab’s Lal Haveli, itself symbolises a maze and labyrinth in man’s life. Som considers it a creation of his hallucination, “Did Lal Haveli ever exist? Could it be a fragment an overheated imagination, a vapour, like that little cloud beyond my window, crossing the face of midnight moon? Were it not for the images- photographs of the soul- the pass time and again before my eyes, I might, indeed, have doubted its existence” (LL 25). Joshi straightforwardly tries to merge Banaras and its mystery with rational and materialistic society like Mumbai.

According to Indian belief, Banaras is a city of God, which is located on the bank of holy river the Ganga. While catching the readers’ stance, Joshi tries to demarcate Banaras as a city of miracle, spirituality, God, and redemption. Like Hamlet, Som also does not get any object to share his emotion that is why his conscience cries for something. For him Lal Haveli appears as a next world or new world that seems him the labyrinth of life. He thinks that something or someone is chasing him that has no image therefore he always looks very troubled that he says to K.:

It looked ridiculous from the skyscraper of Bombay: a tawdry, sensual don, a dead house in a dead city. Aftab’s dargah and temples were no less ridiculous for all their claims of commanding a mysterious world, as pretentious and meaningless as the holy bulls of Banaras. If there was nothing new under the sun, as he said, there was nothing new in
them either, or in Lal Haveli or in that room of Gargi’s where, in a waking dream, I had once been. If there was nothing new under the sun, then whatever it was that I wanted, I was not going to get. (LL 99)

Thus, the condition of Som’s life becomes a dark room where nothing seems visible and in due course, he entangles into the labyrinth of life. Indira Bhatta and Suja Alexander write over the condition of Som that Arvind M. Nawale cites in his book, “Som is like Abhimanyu in The Mahabhata who is not able to come out of ‘Chakravyuva’. Bhaskar loses himself in the Chakravyuva of life and death, reality and truth, doubt and faith” (Nawale 47-48). Similarly, Nawale again cites further Usha Bande remarks, “Like T. S. Eliot’s hollow man, Som is afraid to face reality, whether of life or death. The situation is like that of Dante’s Limbo the realm of nothingness where he is trapped” (48).

The present novel is a unique demonstration of Joshi on the patterns of ‘collective consciousness’ and ‘racial memory’ discussed by Jung and Frazer among psychologists as Northrop Frye, Leslie Fiddler, and Miss Bodkin among modern myth critics. Shubha Tiwari writes in her article, “Race Consciousness in Arun Joshi’s The Last Labyrinth”, that Bhatanagar cites in his book The Novels of Arun Joshi: A Critical Study, “We are reminded in nothing of everyday, human life but rather of dreams, high time fears and the dark recesses of mind that we sometimes sense with misgiving” (107).

In all his heroes, Som and Billy are such figures who seek refuge in a mystical primitivism, especially running away from the sophisticated life of urban, scientific and mechanized world. Som believes in an intuitive religion that is based on
fundamental natural tendency of man through which anyone would like to fulfil his or her desire. However, he has two types of personalities in him: the man and the peasant that denote Hardy and Lawrence’s major characters who also roam around the world of nature only in search of fulfilling their desire.

Often, the novel moves on belief and disbelief of its supreme power like God and His existence. Som is an agnostic person who always puts the question of God’s existence that becomes very much affirm after mother’s death. His belief in existence of God reminds Nietzsche’s ‘Death of God’, that T. K. Ghosh writes in his book, “The son travels farther perhaps largely it would appear because of the person of Anuradha. But they travel a similar path even through the path itself keeps turning upon itself’ (139). Once in a perplexity on rational basis he asks Gargi:

Why should there be this turn to evolution? Why should man be equipped, burdened, with this strange . . . this strange sensibility, or urge or drive? Is it by chance? Or, is there a meaning to it? Is it superstition? The moral influence of others? I have my doubts about all those explanations. Moreover, how did those others get the morals in the first place? . . . Darwin didn’t say how are supposed to evolve further. (LL 120)

With the passage of time he realises that ‘Will to Power’ is a matter of vision that how one is taking it in one’s mind. Som’s illusion and troublesome do not clear therefore throughout his life he runs after in search of meaning and his identity. Further in discussion over belief, Anuradha tells, “May be Krishna begins where Darwin left off’ (LL 121). Her remarks over Krishna and Darwin touch his heart, but
find no way to move out from the world of illusion so he says her, “But what is Krishna? I wanted to add. All of sudden, though, I wasn’t much interested in the argument, I wasn’t interested in Darwin or Krishna, or the spirit of the Cro-Magnons” (LL 121). His distracted vision keeps him away from reality therefore he starts drinking heavy wine. Once having drunk he roams almost every streets of Banaras and becomes ridiculous of everyone’s eyes. In its impact he satirises people’s belief over God, “What I am drunk Allah comes to me, stares at me but say nothing. So I drink the more. One day He will speak to me . . . God does not exist . . . If he exists let Him give me sign” (LL 54). After coming out from the heavy heart attack he again ridicules God’s existence before Aftab saying, “God is like having a third King in a game of chess” (LL 153). Similarly Jean Paul Sartre opinion is cited by T. K. Ghosh in his book, “If you admit God, it is because you are afraid to be what you are, simply men, and to be self sufficient. I say: God is not, man is sufficient unto himself” (18). Som’s above-mentioned point of view refers the Western atheistic point of view, which is far away from the Indian existential philosophy that in fact opens the gate of hope, light, certitude, truth, knowledge, and peace. In contrast to Som’s thinking over the existence of God, lord Krishna, Himself clarifies His existence in each creature and creation of the universe. As he preaches to Arjun in Kurukshetra:

Sarganamadirantasca mahdyacaivahamarjuna

Adhyatmavidya Vidyanam Vedah pravadatamaham.

“Of creation I am the beginning, the end also the middle, O Arjun; of the science (I am) the science of the self; of those who debate I am the dialectic.” (Radhakrishnan314 Chapt.10,32)
However, by birth, Som is an Indian but his belief is almost rational like the Westerns. As an executive, he never takes interest to goes through any religious books and lectures. As Radhakrishnan cites Plato’s view in his *The Bhagavad-Gita*, “It is universal science. Without it, the departmental sciences become misleading. The possession of the sciences as a whole, if it does not include the best, will in some few cases aid but more often harm the owner.”(314) To clarify, further, God’s existence Radhakrishnan quotes lord Krishna’s preaching on His existence in this world:

Dando damayatamasmi nitirasmi jigisatam

Maunam caivasmi guhyanam jnanam jnanavatamaham.

“Of those who chastise I am the rod (of chastisement); of those that seek victory I am the wise policy; of things secret I am the silence and of the knower’s of wisdom I am the wisdom. (Radhakrishanan 316 Chapt.10, 38)

As an Indian aristocratic person, Som is spiritually rootless from its zenith to nadir. In fact, no works of Joshi are untouched with mystery, miracles, myth, sociocultural ethos and philosophical heritage. Talking on Indian ethos and myth, M.K. Bhatnagar cites K.S. Shrinivasan’s opinion, “. . . The characteristic Indianess is traceable to the totality of the myth of India embodied in themes such as Shiva-Parvati, Radha-Krishna, Ram-Sita and so on, they being part of our collective national psyche. . . . Tales from Panchatantra Kathasamsatgara, and the extinct Brihatkatha are as much part of the national psyche” (82). Throughout the whole novel Joshi, focuses on the mystic and religious Indian philosophy. Som is a modern man without any root. He entangles in the grip of six deadly sins manifested in Indian religious
scripture in which he fails to understand his existence: kama(desire), krodh(anger), lobb(greed), moha(allurement), mada(lust), aswarya(pride). The novel especially roams around Som’s hunger of body, spirit and human salvation. His desire to know his self sometimes reminds the knowledge of Bhagavad-Gita that Shri Aurobindo writes in his book *Essays of the Gita*:

> Know then yourself; know your true self to be God and one with the self of all others; know yourself to be a portion of God. Live in what you know; live in the self; live in your supreme spiritual nature, be united with God and Godlike offer, first, all your action as a sacrifice to the and the One in you and to the Highest and the One in the world; deliver last all you are and do into his hands for the supreme and universal spirit to do through you his own will and works in the world. This is the solution that i present to you and in the end, you will find there is no other. (572)

Som is a slave of desire. He is a passion’s slave like Hamlet because nothing gives him happiness and peace. His hunger for body and soul makes him a split personality. Being an over-powered by desire, he becomes the victim of lust (kama), pride, wrath and greed. Therefore from beginning to the end of the novel he goes to possess Anuradha, and his lust appears on various occasion of the novel. He talks about the physical beauty of Anuradha to K., “I awoke in middle of the night, depressed, the taste of tranquilisers in my mouth. My first thought was of Anuradha. I thought of her as she had been in the dargah, sitting close to me, her hand on my arm” (*LL* 18-19). It is also believed that man’s life becomes tragic when his desire could
not be fulfilled. Since desire leads toward attachment and in it, he becomes passionate to possess that thing which he likes. In respect to attachment and desire, Shri Aurobindo writes in *Essay on the Gita*, “By that attachment comes, by attachment desire, by desire distress, passion and anger when the desire is not satisfied or is thwarted or opposed, and by passion the soul is obscured, the intelligence and will forget to see and be seated in the calm observing soul. (100)

Like his other novels, Joshi hereby also focuses on the social institution of marriage. He presents contractive characters of Som and Sindi on the issue of marriage as one always pines for marriage while second one runs away from it. Som discusses over the issue of marriage to Anuradha and Aftab, on this, she says, “You can’t marry everyone you love. So, why marry anyone at all?” (*LL* 39). On another occasion, he comes to know her response over marriage, “I cannot imagine I am married to Aftab. I can imagine I am married to you. My mother used to imagine she was married to Krishna” (*LL*116). When Gargi tells Som that Anuradha is his Shakti then he starts thinking to possess her. His heart starts trembling and becomes out of control when he visits Europe and America with his wife Gita. He misses her very much consequently in the mid of the trip he comes back to meet her. He finds himself incomplete in her absence that reminds incompleteness of those God and goddesses and lovers like Shiv-Parvati, Radha-Krishna, Sita-Ram, Romeo-Juliet, Heer-Ranjha, Laila-Majunu and so on. Without Anuradha, Som’s body appears dead, motionless. Since it appears that, she is his soul, while he is just a body. Anuradha is water, air, and desire of his life that is very much similar to Billy Biswas. He clarifies his abnormal behaviour and troublesome conditions in fearful atmosphere to K., “I took medicines for my fears but nothing happened. I knew medicines would change
nothing. In my heart, I knew my fear had nothing to do with my body or with my nerves. I was afraid, I knew, because Anuradha had left me” (LL 140).

Anuradha’s is a very complex and strange character that Joshi has ever created in his all other novels. When she comes to know about Som’s condition, she starts living in dilemma whether she should live with Aftab or accepts Som’s love. In fact, she was in debt to Aftab who supported her. However, she loves Som from the core of her heart but finds herself in illusion to accept him. Once she gives him moral lesson, “There is a God up there . . . In those mountains . . . There is a temple there. On a hill lined with lepers. You must come with me . . . God will cure you” (LL 115). His search of God’s existence in the world continues throughout the novel but he never tries to peep in his heart. In this respect, Radhakrishanan quotes lord Krishna’s preach in his book the *Bhagavadgita*:

Tameva saranam gaccha Sarvabhavena bharata

Tatprasadat param santum Sthanam prapsyasi sasvatam.

Flee unto Him for shelter with all thy being, O Bharata(Arjun). By His grace shall thou obtain supreme peace and eternal abode.(Radhakrishanan 444 Chapt.18, 62)

Som, like, an uprooted modern man moves from place to place in search of his individual existence in this world. Talking about his fearful condition even with Anuradha, he tells K., “I lay awake angry myself, angrier still at her dragging God into that room which until that moment had been the stage for satisfying my wildest fantasies. A mountain wind howled the guesthouse. As I sank into sleep its howl
turned into the tired ancient cry I want, I want, I want” (LL 155). Luxurious life, wealth, and pride block the understanding of Som who fails in taking any definite decision in his life even he becomes an egoist person who does not care anyone’s feelings. Once, Anuradha scolds him on ridiculing her trust on lord Krishna, “You are not as clever as you think. You are wrong about many things. You are wrong even about yourself. You think you know a lot, when, in fact, you don’t” (LL 55).

Similarly, at the end of the novel, Aftab scolds him on his ego, overconfidence of knowledge and education from the foreign countries, “You don’t understand us. You work by logic. By your brain. You are proud of your education or what you consider education. There is an understanding that only suffering and humiliation bring. Anuradha has that Even I have a bit of it. You are empty of that understanding” (LL 200).

Som is the result of his atheistic perception that with the passage of time creates the cage of loneliness around him. He finds himself physically exhausted, mentally shattered and morally degenerated with his dream and insomnia. He could not recognise the secret of life as well as his own secrecy. Before meeting Anuradha, he has fear of himself but as soon as she comes in his life the fear of loneliness, rootlessness and meaninglessness eliminate. He throws his entire weight and turbulence of his life on her that she affords patiently. It was only his desire to possess and get everything that leads him toward the tragic land. Therefore it is generally considered that man’s problem of life germinates with his desire which leads him toward the realm of anger and devastation. Lord Krishna preaches in the battlefield of Kurukshetra that Radhakrishanan writes in his book the *Bhagavadgita*:
Dhyayato visayan pumsah Sangatesupajayat

Sangat Sanjayate kamah kamat krodho bhijayota.

When a man dwells in his mind on the objects of sense, attachment to them is produced. From attachment springs desire and from desire come anger. (143 Chapt.2, 62)

As Kierkegaard believes that to be Christian is to suffer before God, therefore his tragic heroes suffer on religious sphere. Since he considers that human beings goes through the three spheres of life: Aesthetic stage, ethical stage, and religious stage in which religious stage is the highest point of his life where man realises his existence in this universe. Following the ideas of Kierkegaard Joshi also manifolds his two protagonists: Ratan Rathor and Som Bhaskar, who lead the life from its three spheres and ultimately meet in the world of God. Kierkegaard thinks that one can lead the religious life on the basis of belief that both of the characters ultimately follow. Som does not find any ray of hope until he comes in touch with religious persons like Gargi and Anuradha. A very strange kind of feeling generates in him when he finds that Anuradha has left him that he expresses to K., “I had fallen into a bottomless pit of despair, like a shipwrecked sailor sinking into the ocean”(*LL* 132). His luxurious life itself panics him. Even everything such as elevator, bridges, motor cars, sea breeze, electrics, switches, and so on give him harsh notes of life that also create gloomy and dark looks of life. Morning and evening look like boring and unpleasant without her. After recovering from his second heart attack he directly goes to meet her in a drunken state, where he behaves wrong manner with Aftab on which Aftab scolds him, “You don’t even know what you want. You are being torn apart by your own
doubts. Your doubts are the wolves that are going to eat you up’ (LL 151). In anger, he thinks to destroy Aftab by buying all the shares of his company.

At the end of novel, when he comes to know that Anuradha has left him, he becomes out of control and thinks that she has deceived him. While, in fact he did not know the devotion of Anuradha who sacrifices everything for the sake of his life by begging, persisting and weeping before Gargi to save his life who was suffering massive heart attack. She even threatens to commit suicide if she does not do any miracle. Thus, it seems that it is one of the most mature work of Joshi in which he infuses both fantasy and reality of life. Anuradha leaves a gift for Som and when he opens it, finds an idol of lord Krishna that symbolises that the way of salvation of man is only following the path of spirituality. But Som becomes like mad man who directly goes to Gargi’s cottage where she tries to convince him by writing on the pad, “There is no harm in believing that God exists . . . . God does not work in this simple manner, God does not seek revenge Man’s” (LL197). Similarly, Kafka’s vision of life in The Castle, is so bleak, which represents what Eliseo Vivas calls the ‘negative tendencies of the age.’ As T. K. Ghosh cites Kafka’s view, “The negative aspect consist in ‘exploring the mystery of Divinity and since we cannot know what God is, in defining everything that God is not.’” (17) As a symbol of spirituality, Gargi becomes the pioneer of Som’s spiritual life. She manifests his belief and disbelief in God. When she convinces him not to doubt on God’s existence, he tells, “No, don’t misunderstand me I want to know. Probably, I want to believe. But one can’t order belief. I must have evidence. You see what I mean. I cannot give up Anuradha, you know that, in absence of evidence I intend to challenge the whole thing” (LL 197). On
this Gargi herself tells him a philosophical idea, “We are all children trying to reach up to a crack in the door to peep into the room” (*LL* 197).

Som does not believe in ideas and philosophy because he searches the evidence in each object. He has doubt in all the philosophies and metaphysics of life. For him man’s existence comes first, which is the final motto of existential philosophy. During talking with K. he tells in a very harsh manner. “Who know the truth? Who can tell where and how arose the universe? The Gods are later than its beginning: who knows, therefore, whence comes this creation? Only that God who sees in highest heaven; He only knows whence came this universe, He only knows. Or perhaps, He knows not” (*LL* 142). Gargi’s masterpiece message of philosophy also could not affect him, and then he directly goes to receive Anuradha who also rejects his proposal to go with him. Som never expected that his life would take u-turn when he meets Anuradha in evening after second heart attack. He comes to know that Anuradha did not return from the temple since last night. Police also starts the search operation of Anuradha but no clue appears of her. The novel ends with the mysterious disappearance of Anuradha from the Lal Haveli. On the question of mystical disappearance of Anuradha and her role in the novel, Jasbir Jain quotes Joshi’s view in her book, “Anuradha’s role in the novel is to lead Bhaskar through the subconscious. Then he loses her. I was hinting at the old classical dictum that you do not get anything without the sacrificing something. So she is to be taken away from him” (Jain 97).

The disappearance of Anuradha becomes a new episode of the novel that Joshi himself meticulously moves further. In utter grimness, Som makes a frenzied appeal
to Anuradha from the depth of his besieged soul. Similarly, Bendrix at the end of Green’s novel also prays to God like a weary and defeated person. After some times, Som receives a letter from Aftab full of curses following his grief of losing Anuradha. He reads it:

> ‘For me now,’ . . . ‘all is desolation . . .’ take hold I tell myself . . . .’
> You can live without her . . . “take hold Aftab Rai, you can live without her” . . . but I cannot live without her . . . endlessly, I walk the mazes . . . night turns into day . . . day into night . . . I knock my head against walls . . . cry out my love for her . . . she does not listen . . . I am finished . . . I had liked you . . . I had let a snake enter my home . . . she thought she would handle you . . . curse you . . . you escaped to the hotel that night . . . but how long . . . your time will come . . . while you live you will rot . . . when does you shall not find peace . . . from one graveyard to another you will wander . . . a million years. (LL 205)

After completing the letter, he looks helpless, motionless, dispersed, and uprooted young man. He thinks that something is hovering over him that would not let him give the opportunity to expiate. Even like Ratan Rathor, he does not think about expiation and penance over the destructive world of Aftab. Depressed, frustrated and desolated Som makes a fervent appeal to Anuradha to pray to God for him, which shows that he still is shameless to pray to God. In a terrible and horror notion, he prays to Anuradha:

> Anuradha, listen. Listen to me wherever you. Is there a God where are you? Have you met Him? Does He have a face? Does He speak? Does He hear? Does He understand the language that we speak? Anuradha if
there is God and if you have met Him and if He is willing to listen then, Anuradha, my soul, tell Him, tell this God, to have mercy upon me. Tell Him I am weary of so many fears; so much doubting. Of this, dark earth and these empty heavens. Plead for me, Anuradha. He will listen to you. (LL 205)

Thus, the novel reaches at the same place from where it begins. Som is seen involved in his business but his hollowness always roars before him in every moment of his life. His loneliness and spiritual agony remains penetrative. Unlike the other characters of Joshi’s novels, he is not the growing one since he never leaves his ego that is why he never gains the path of salvation like Ratan Rathor. T. K. Ghosh writes in his book, “His dilemma remains unresolved- as he finds no escape route out of the intricate labyrinth in which he is lost. One wonders if the failure of Som Bhaskar is a deliberate attempt on the part of Joshi to reproduce the reality of life where a readymade solution to such a complex problem is seldom found” (145). Som, in fact, is a deep-rooted psychological exploration of a lost soul. His baffled soul fails to follow right path of salvation and it is because of his disbelief in God and on himself. In fact, the root of his failure lays in his rational vision and intellectual pride. His excessive reliance on his conviction that science and logic can solve fails to search out individual identity.

Joshi portrays various dimension of suffering of his protagonists such as Sindi suffers from the problem of identity, Billy suffers from dissatisfaction, Ratan suffers from alienation and nowhere man, while Som suffer from the disbelief in God and lack of spiritual power. Sindi and Ratan suffer from the disturbance of their private
world, whereas Billy searches from world within world. Similarly, Som seeks from labyrinth to labyrinth. Joshi puts existential philosophic vision of life into the mouth of Som. His loneliness, alienation and anxiety appear in the song of Azizun, which shows the vision of terror existential notion:

... it reminded you of that core of loneliness around which all of us are built. It might have emerged from the slums of Banaras but centuries had gone into its perfection. It rode the night like a searchlight, lighting up the ruins of an ancient abandoned city with which I, too, was familiar. All my life, at intervals, I, too, had not able, for all the striving, to chart a course. (LL 49)

Som’s pain, agony, and strange look compel him to mourn over his condition. One can definitely remain unsurprised, having looked Som’s condition, who is millionaire, having a beautiful wife like Gita, and two handsome children, still, suffering from problem of identity, hollowness, fearful notion, and dissatisfied with himself. He runs away from the responsibility of life that is just opposite of the ideas of Sartre, whose concept of freedom remains with responsibility in order to search out one’s identity. Even once, on his own pitiable condition he says to Anuradha, “I am dislocated. My mind is out of focus. There is something sitting right in front of me and I cannot see it. Why am I here? Why do I come here? Because I want you: why else?” (LL 97). On his arrival of Banaras, he asks many questions to himself and unfolds his personal feeling before Anuradha. Although he goes temple with her but he does not to pray God that clarifies his stubborn disbelief. In the novel Joshi directly quotes Kierkegaard’s view, “Prayer does not change God but it changes him who
prays” (LL108). Really, the opinion of Kierkegaard lies on the right path of spirituality in which man keeps changes his point of view on the daily routine of life. However, Som judges Kierkegaard’s point of view on his logical sphere of ideology that is why it also fails to affect him. He visits Banaras not to remove his disgusting uprooted condition but to possess Anuradha, which is why his heart never finds the right track to remove problem of his identity. Nevertheless, later on he realises his mistakes of life after losing Anuradha that he expresses before K.:

I breathed deeply, taking in the fresh, cool air. I was disgusted with them, with myself, with those dissolute cigarettes whose perfume clung to my fingers. I was disgusted with letting myself be touched by their decadence. I felt dirty and bitter. I knew I should have gone back to the hotel. I was, of course, obsessed with her, just as I had been obsessed with all those other women. . . . (LL 53)

Hence, Som realises the reality of life when he gets the experience of Banaras and Mumbai. Although he was born with, the silver spoon in his mouth yet could not live like those of rich men of Mumbai. A sense of horror, at first, develops in him, when he watches all those funeral pyres on the Manikarnika Ghat, and all those burning fleshes and bursting of bones. He thinks that that reality of life is death that always constructs a kind of fear in him. In fact, he learns the suffering of life with her and to some extent Aftab. As T. K. Ghosh writes Joshi’s opinion in his book, “It is very difficult to steer one’s way through life without God, or at least concepts of life right of wrong” (147). Thus Joshi’s above quoted view refers that man cannot obtain path of salvation and hope until he believe in God or religion.
Joshi’s protagonists of first three novels overcome their predicament and get in touch with an affirmative knowledge of life and world through immense suffering of fear, anxiety, loss of self, and encounter with death. Som’s life is like a glass-jar, in which he has been shaped without the spiritual roots and understanding of his self. He has lived a life of illusions, of indecision, negation and frustration. His ego mends a wall against the reality of life. Almost his delusion subverts the comprehension of reality. T.K. Ghosh quotes Sanjay Narasimhaiah’s view on Som’s life in his book, “A study of Som’s character shows that introspection itself is not enough unless there is strength of mind to fiercely alter one’s living, thinking and being. It can be an indulgence too, for when one expects him to suffer and learn he gives himself to defiance” (147-48). Som’s condition becomes very much absurd when Anuradha leaves him. He lies on the bank of the stream with his head on the bundle of shares, and looks around the emptiness and meaningless world, where he finds sky above him totally dried and void, which recalls the condition of Prince Andrew in Leo Tolstoy’s *War and Peace*:

I was reminded of Prince Andrew, knocked down like a dummy without firing a shot. He had imagined himself to be ambitious. He had hoped Austerlitz would do for him what Toulon had done for the Bonaparte. Lying on the mud, cannon balls flying over him, he had stared at the vast cosmic impersonal dome of the sky all these years. Why had I never looked at the sky before. (*War and Peace* 198)

Since it is believed that man’s outlook over trust, belief and commitment accelerates the power to face the reality of life. The lack of faith brings a sense of upheaval
dryness in Som’s life that he confesses to K., “. . . and I had fallen into a bottomless pit of despair, like a shipwrecked sailor sinking into the ocean” (LL 132).

Both Som and Aftab are opposite to each other. Aftab is a very practical person who possesses cultured and refined personality. His outlook is oriental while Som’s occidental. Aftab’s world was passing peaceful until Som enters his life. The entry of Som is the entry of struggle, pain, and tragedy in his life. His speeches are strongly presented by Joshi, which are very much philosophical and heavy. Once he speaks to Som and Gargi, “The problem lies in the stars, we become what our stars makes us” (LL 89). The above-mentioned statement of Aftab unfolds man’s inability to control over his fortune that has already been written by someone or supreme power. Aftab’s opinion also reminds Hamlet’s opinion in Shakespeare’s Hamlet, “There’s divinity that shapes our ends.” (Hamlet 5.2.).

In all in his novels, Joshi repeatedly returns to show the beauty of nature. Like his earlier three novels, he, in The Last Labyrinth, reflects the beauty of nature that symbolises man’s salvation, happiness, joy, fertility lies in the lap of nature. Nietzsche’s ‘Will to Power’ as a whole exists in the world of Nature. It would be very much remarkable to compare second and fourth novels of Joshi, where Billy Biswas takes shelter in the world of Nature while Som moves towards city of God and spirituality. Joshi’s this way of portraying the beauty of nature also often recalls D. H. Lawrence who also paves the way of man’s happiness in the lap of nature. As Som goes to the mountain to behold God’s image once suggested by Anuradha, but on the way, he observes the beauty of Nature, “A nearly full moon hung above. Directly
blow us, at the bottom of a precipice, lay the dark surface of a lake. Its waters had the smoothness of black glass” (*LL* 178).

*The Last Labyrinth* is, in a sense, a suffering of those who believes in rationality, reason, and only intellectual judgement. Som’s wisdom regarding individual and society leads him toward a barren land. As Kafka’s heroes, find no way to come out from the labyrinth of the world. They think that God has abandoned the world to mend and take refuge behind the castle of silence and misunderstanding. Kafka himself considers that human life cannot get redemption and get path of God until he or she leaves the way of demonic and alienated life. Like Joshi, some mysterious signs that are hostile to him also surround Kafka that operates life. Therefore, today man’s life remains so absurd and chaotic. The world of Som is like a dream that is divided into two parts in which he suffers and conflicts. Beyond the world of wife, children, K, Thapar, there are a wider world of Anuradha, Aftab, and Gargi in Som’s life. Som’s idea of possessing Anuradha has been highly disturbing, whereas he sees in Gargi the image of his mother that is the recurrent features of his dreams. Som’s recurrent dream of flying in the sky gives an outlet to his deep desire of rising high in his life. Often in Bombay, he imagines that he is in Banaras, with Gargi, and even he becomes the victim of hallucination. In Banaras, he watches a dream, “I dreamt I was in a narrow alley at the end of which a shroud lay. Tall houses stood on both sides of the alley . . . The alley and the houses were deserted. I know who was under the shroud but could not recall his name” (*LL* 95-96).

The beginning of dream confuse his mental state, consequently in his dream, he is haunted by someone whom he does not know. He has been stranger to his
children. On the rational sphere of life, Som’s condition becomes motionless. Siddhartha Sharma cites H.M. Prasad’s opinion in his book, “Som is tormented by his knowledge. Awareness of Spinoza, Freud, Jung, Buddha, and Krishna tormented him. Darwin torments. He has gone through the history of evolution and remembers Darwin by heart. If Descartes is correct if Freud and Jung and Darwin are correct what should he think of his mother’s faith, Geeta’s trust?” (92-93). Som’s busy schedule of materialistic life does not give him opportunity to meet his wife and children, which Joshi presents in a very serious way in the novel. Som’s life and dreams are projected mainly through visual images such as, abstract ideas of life, light, darkness, struggle, some metaphoric images like sun, sky desert, labyrinth, blue room, shroud, etc. He was always busy in transforming the abstract images of life into concrete form. This occurs with the projection of his will, since his dream later on transforms into will. He thinks that he will win the world and will possess Anuradha by his will power, which in fact, leads him towards the place of zero or nothingness. He says to K., “Was it his will . . . or a divine will. The will of the first cause? He knew enough to realize that it could not be his will alone. However, he did not have the evidence to believe that there was a divine will. So he could not make his mind” (LL 188). Thus the quest of Som’s life was not clear to him, on this Siddhartha Sharma cites H.M. Prasad’s opinion, “In his quest, in his intent to unravel cosmic mystery, Bhaskar is a modernised, secularised, empiricized, sceptical Nachiketa who has been denied the faith and resolution of the Upnishadic model” (100).

Thus, The Last Labyrinth is man’s spiritual journey of self-liberation, which recalls one of the artifices of eternity in W.B. Yeats’ “Byzantium” both in the thematic and symbolic development. Until the end of novel, Som fails to get
reconciliation with the problems of life and death, science and religion, and miracle and reason. Therefore, the novel seeks out with the mysteries of human nature and the mysteries of God as it struggles with immeasurable depths of human longing, desperation and greatness. As a lonely figure, an existential battle in a nihilistic sense goes on in his life. Like Som, Joshi himself does not understand the life that he accepts in an interview with Purabi Banerjee, “The Last Labyrinth is a novel that I do not understand myself” (Jain 97).

Thus, Joshi’s second-last novel is a delineation of possessive notion of human nature. It is a novel of human values and its predicament and an ultimate analysis of a warning against a particular state of mind that keeps him away from faith, mysteries of life, man’s joy, peace, light, and certitude. In this novel Joshi generalises, the impact of the Eastern and the Western philosophy over Som’s life but Joshi mostly confines his ideas in the ambiance of the Indian philosophy. Through the novel, he probably tries to deliver a message that man’s possessive nature and his free will most probably lead him towards the world of sorrow, illusion, dread, anxiety, and self-destruction. The story of the novel moves around faith, will, possession and philosophy. As in the novel, it appears that Anuradha and Gargi’s faith in God helps Som to realise his restless self. In general, the novel consents with its setting in Banaras and Bombay that the intricate labyrinth of life can be found in itself through sacrifice, communicable faith for individual meaningful existence. Arun Joshi speaks in an interview about role of Anuradha and Som and the novel that Jasbir Jain cites:

*The Last Labyrinth* is a novel that I do not understand myself . . .

Anuradha’s role in the novel is to lead Bhaskar through the
subconscious. Then he loses her. I was hinting at the old classical
dictum that you do not get anything without sacrificing something. She
is to be taken away from him . . . . A person like Som Bhaskar is quite
alienated from God and knows it. Some people think he will go on like
that and told me so. (Jain 97-98)
Work Cited


