CHAPTER –II
TREATMENT OF QUEST IN ARUN JOSHI’S
THE LAST LABYRINTH AND SHASHI DESHPANDE’S
THE DARK HOLDS NO TERROR

The novel, The Last Labyrinth explores into the complexities of Som Bhaskar embodying an uneasy juxtaposition of the sensuous- deluded and the rational- ironical (Som meaning ‘the moon’ and Bhaskar ‘the sun’), is caught in the labyrinth of worldly desires, singing “the same strident song: “I want. I want. I want” (TLL 11). He has also been dangerously near the portals of the final labyrinth, death. He suffers both from “hunger of the body” and “hunger of the spirit” (TLL 11). These hungers make him not only buy up companies and fall into the snares of feminine enchantment, but also attempt to catch at some form of faith. These two pursuits commingle in the novel, giving it a central duality around which a number of other dualities and contrasts revolve: the Som of the past and that of the present, Som and Aftab, Som and Anuradha, Banaras and Bombay, Lal Haveil and the pure and open Himalayas, and above all, a maze of doubting and questioning and a steady faith, symbolized by the bright flame burning in the remote temple and embodied in the planned death of the old man who has travelled nine hundred miles to die on the bank of a lake. A close scrutiny of his personality reveals insecurity and hollowness which propel him from one goal to another. He is relentlessly driven by undefined hungers – hunger for money, hunger for fame, hunger for Anuradha’s body and a hunger for some spiritual sublimity. As O.P. Mathur aptly remarks in Indian Fiction in English: problems and promises that “The Last Labyrinth seems to depict the vague but unmistakably reaching out for faith and understanding by a man lost in the labyrinth
of desires and the vague simmering of his discontent with this type of life” (Qtd. Pathak 142).

He is the battleground between the two hungers of body and spirit. And in the fight his mind takes side with the body. Being overpowered by desire, he falls a victim to *kama* and other accompanying vices such as lust, wrath, greed and pride. The successive pages of the novel, especially the first part, unfold his indomitable hunger for sex. His excessive preoccupation with sex makes him a miniature Casanova, for he is, in the words of Leela Sabnis, a “compulsive fornicator” (*TLL* 80). The book, thus, gives a healthy expression to the forces of Id. Thick with desire, and the path of *moksha* being illusive, for he himself is blind to it, he goes for passion, responding to the ancient music of desire that either he hears or his unconscious self sings: ‘I want, I want, I want, I want,’ that appears and reappears in the novel time and again. And this hunger he fulfils with Anuradha, an antique looking woman, who is like “a monument: tall, handsome, ruined…thirty, thirty-five…from Bengal, from Sikkim, from the valleys of Nepal” (*TLL* 12) and who possesses the characteristics of medieval courtesans “around whom wars might have been fought” (*TLL* 133). It is in his effort to possess her wildly and madly that she becomes the centre of his life in both bodily and spiritual terms. Gargi rightly conveys this when she writes to Som: “She (Anuradha) is your shakti” (*TLL* 121). For she is a real Shakti who can transform Som’s hunger of the body into hunger of the spirit. To him making love to Anuradha is a kind of eternal renewal of his search for the last labyrinth, which he believes he will get in sexual communion. Therefore, with his eternal question, ‘what is in the last labyrinth?’ his sexual possession of Anuradha ever increases with ferocity each time they meet. Anuradha, on her part, does evade the question from being solved, perhaps with the conviction that one has to quest for this
oneself. Ultimately, the last labyrinth turns out to be the realization of the existence of God or the death of the body and the consequent liberation of the soul. In the whole process of this march of human soul from the darkness of maya to renunciation the novelist’s emphasis is on the practical philosophy of karmayoga, which unlike sanyasa (abandonment of worldly affairs and actions after self - realization, as Gautama Buddha did), does not aim at “giving up worldly affairs but continuing to perform them in such a way that they do not create any difficulty in the matter of obtaining Release” (Tilak 82). The philosophy of karmayoga in attaining the realization of the self out of participating in the worldly activities that stood in the way of Bhaskar as a barrier because of his truncated quest for different hungers.

The Protagonist Bhaskar suffered from compulsive habitual syndrome on an account of his extraordinary education at various Universities that stood in his way as a barrier in not allowing him to enjoy the bliss of happiness pent up within him. He had an adjustable wife by name Geetha. He had two children who gave him no trouble. He happened to be a plastic industrialist for which his father had done enough for its excellent foundations. He had no enemies socially or from business quarters. But he had a weakness for women. That too, if he found a woman with mehandi in her hands, he lost his life and ran away from his routine. The taste for such woman with mehandi developed in him when he was twelve or thirteen during his school-hostel days. His headmaster’s wife comforted him when he was hit by the news of his mother’s death. His father was a lovable father but failed to put in him faith in God in all one’s activities. He put in him scientific reason that drove him to look at things with the spectacle of intellect. This scientific judgment and reason- oriented evaluation of life’s successes and failures did not give him any solution to come to grip with the realities of life. Often his reason oriented western as well as eastern
education did not provide him an answer for his desire “I want ……I want” (TLL I2). He knew that he needed something but what that something he did not know how to get materialized.

His quest for this something, he fully realized, was not material advancement nor for any fame or power. Still he needed this enigmatic compulsive and obsessive desire. Thus the protagonist suffered out of the identity of his desire and thereby he himself suffered from identity crisis. He had everything to fall back on; still he needed more and more. Even in getting more he did not derive any satisfaction. His education and his experience made him realize the vacuum created out of such power of wealth. His problem is not in achieving desire but in finding out a reason for desire. In this attempt to search for a concrete meaning for his desire, the protagonist was made to interact with persons like Anuradha, Aftab, Gargi, his father, his mother, Geeta, his family, Dr.Kashyap and others. He was a millionaire at the age of twenty-five. On account of his business schedule, he became an alcoholic. At this early age itself, his body’s equilibrium was terribly disturbed that also affected his mind too. After having had his reason oriented education he could not settle account with the sayings of the old and so he started detailing his compulsive desire syndrome to find an answer to his hunger of the body and hunger of the spirit. He had been to the world’s finest Universities wherein his father spent a quarter million for his education. In addition to this formal education, he had self-studied many things. From this background of this taste on things and matter and his own personal evaluation on these material possession, the protagonist’s search for the meaning of his desire was not for material aggrandizement but still he was left with no option to be after such material gains on account of his thirty five years time factor in his life and his cry… ‘I want, I want’. On one of his plastic manufacturers Association meeting at Delhi, he saw Anuradha.
What attracted him in her was her taste in wearing “brocade sari, large gold borders, sleeves up to the elbow, antique jewellery” (TLL 12).

It was from his secretary Thapar that he learnt that she happened to be the wife of Aftab, a fellow plastic manufacturer. He learnt more of Aftab from Thapar that he was a peculiar man. He also hinted that if he had any dealings with him he could work through her. This touched his forthrightness quick. Then he enquired about him and those details appeared to be very peculiar. Aftab belonged to a Zamindar family. They fled to Banaras after mutiny in Peshawar. He was a secretive sort of a man. His wife Anuradha was once a brief film star. She was known to be a shrewd and clever woman. When he judged her at a distance in the party, he saw on her head a tattoo mark “A permanent bindi burnt into the skin” (TLL 13). She approached him with an ashtray and enquired him surprisingly how could a Brahmin flourish in business…. This strange question of her tickled him to say that all those who had brain could run any business. When he offered his light for her cigarette, a strange feeling went through him that the hand of her was known to him ever since he was a child, a boy in his “fantasies of lust” (TLL 14). His body chemistry could not give him any answer to what was happening to him. It was a spontaneous feeling of lust at his age of thirty five. When he was dumbstruck, Aftab invited him to the Dargah that night as his guest. The experience he had on his way to Aftab’s dargah was a frustrating one, though his actress traveled with him. Alcohol weighed him down. He saw blue colour on all things and figures clad in white roamed about silently. He also heard the notes of Sarangi from giggling women. All the houses were low roofed and pavements were made on gutters. Even without knowing his purpose of visit, the protagonist entered into the dargah where he felt, “there was death with vengeance” (TLL 15). He even
realized that his “euphoric heights of the intercontinental to these desolate mounds” 
(*TLL 16*) were matters that he did not really deserve.

As mentioned earlier, Anuradha was really shrewd who hit him on the loins whether his purpose of visit was to grab Aftab’s business or otherwise she did not like him to grab his business. She wanted him to leave Aftab alone to carry on his venture. He told her then that his meeting Aftab was purely on business and business means survival of the fittest. He also reinstated that Aftab “was not organized enough to survival” (*TLL 20*). At that time she put her hand on his arm, he noticed mehndi in her hands. For which she replied that was the reason for her application of mehndi. He appreciated her taste in having mehndi on her long fingers. It was really ironic for him appreciating the beauty of a woman’s fingers in the decadent dargah.

He sensed this contradiction and reached his hotel. Still he had in him the lingering effect of the perfume which he had never come across. What a type of a lady she was he could not guess. Whether she enticed him for saving Aftab or whether she enchanted him to conquer Aftab, he could not guess. But he was sure to visit her at Banaras. Aftab invited him to his place for further rounds of business talks. It was his visit to Elephant, a cave along with his father and their family Dr. Kashyap when he came to know about his mother’s faith in Krishna that alone killed her. It was here that his father told him that he was of late wondering about, “causes of things that happen to men, to objects” (*TLL 22*). It was the cause that was fated for Som to go after Anuradha and Aftab. His wife Geeta and his secretary Thapar did not know his secret visit to Banaras. It was because they did not know his thoughts and sensation.

He realized the awakening in him about Anuradha was linked to the headmaster’s wife who with mehndi on her palm pushed the hair away from his
forehead and he was mesmerized by those “hieroglyphs of a new world, a world of wild erotic instincts” (TLL 25). The same erotic instincts aroused in him the sexual desire when he happened to sit alone with Anuradha in the dargah. Both the women had mehndi in their hands and both caressed him. Thus Som tried to put two plus two together that his longing for a womanly caress was an essential creed of desire that had been lurking in him from his fifteenth year to his thirty fifth year. His father explicated to him and to Dr.K that for birth, growth, decline and death there should be a first cause. Even for matters like right and wrong, there should be a first cause. So also for emotion like anger and hate. So too for thought. But to get an evidence for the first cause, one has to rely on the sayings of mystics. His father’s quest to find the first cause of the creation appeared to him so far a matter of puzzle but now he slowly realized the first cause of his link with Anuradha had its genesis out of his erotic instincts which he experienced in his early teen age.

The dwelling of a business man like Aftab created in him a sense of mystery. It was a narrow lane with wooden buildings created on both sides where men like maroon sat on cushions with caps on their heads, pan on their mouths making them appear red. There were beggars, mendicants and persons appeared with their bodies smeared with ashes. The entire atmosphere was charged with bizzare illusory world. It was to this maya world that Som was taken in in a dodge car so incongruous in its appeal and attraction. After elbowing through many narrow lanes flooded with people, he was taken to a house situated at a blind alley. Aftab invited him at the door step with a necktie that belonged to a regiment of the Indian Army. There was a broken fountain at the entrance of the house symbolically suggesting that the end of many flow of relation shall be broken finally. He was then taken inside a cool room filled up with furniture of ornate design and shape. He saw Anuradha sitting on a
divan with Persian carpets spread all round the room. This room with all furnishings and get up appeared to be an artistic and mysterious cubicle on chamber, and what acts men and women would do in such a secluded place, “Heaven alone knows” (TLL 35). This place is called La Haveli. To this place Som was taken by Aftab. Som felt that anything could happen in this place.

Aftab lived in a part called La Haveli at Banaras. It was bizzare in many ways. He was taken by Tarakki, Aftab’s chauffeur. Aftab narrated his fortune which he enjoyed after his marriage with Anuradha. It was at that time his father was also alive and money flowed from many directions. But suddenly everything stopped. Anuradha sensed this loss and cried. Then he told him that he was ready to sell a part of his company’s shares to a right man. This was the advice of his wife Anuradha. For Som, the right kind of a person was one who had money to buy. He also told him that left to himself he would be ready to buy all of his shares but half of buying means not really a venture but some attempt. Aftab told him point blank that it was difficult to argue with him about this proposition. Aftab’s choice place La Haveli becomes meaningful for him because the realization of all prospects of riches ultimately lead to nothing. It is through the labyrinthine passage of time and space men move to death leaving nothing behind. The essence of temporary pleasure out of worldly riches is to be lived day to day and impulse to impulse and not out of consolidation. Aftab inherited this tendency from his father who had no plans to consolidate the wealth that he had. Even concentrating on wealth and consolidation were alien to him. Still he held the reigns of an industrialist. Though the modern business did not give him prosperity, he could not leave it altogether on account of Anuradha’s influence on it. What in him was emptiness that he could not fill it with plastic powder. But still he held the reigns of business for Anuradha’s sake hoping to have better future.
As Baskar did not know that there was no new thing under the sun, he was made to believe by Aftab and Anuradha on spiritual and mystic matters as well as filial matters. It was after who took him to Gargi’s place. To reach her place, they have to cross Ganga that appeared to be “Unknown stream in some unknown segment of the universe leading to a reality that he (I) had not yet known” (TLL 49). It was in that trip, he was smitten by the mystic factor that buying his share and bringing the business of Aftab under his control suddenly dwindled on account of the inexplicable cast of spell on him by Gargi. The same spell was also cast by Anuradha who told him that her relation with Aftab was only a “make belief” (TLL 44). She wanted to be true to him since he gave her honour, safety, protection and status. She did not even care when he openly said to Som that she was his wife; still he allowed her to move freely with him in order to provide him pleasure and win him on his business. Thus Aftab and Anuradha ensnare Som for which both employed mystic tool of spirituality and physical tool of sexuality.

This aspect of him appeared to Som that Aftab conducted himself as an “ex-nawab” (TLL 53). And tried to placate him on the issue of selling shares. All his attempts like taking him to dargah, La Haveli, music consort and dance performance were factors to make him believe that he had in his blood the tinge of Nawab’s essence that tried him his best to convince and handle him delicately favourable and dexterously affable in his business ventures with him. Further in such a situation with his beloved, her enigmatic husband, his antique taste of conventional music and sad songs, labyrinthine domesticities and ‘the maroon blue room’ in which all enticements and enchantments taking place reeled him to feel what he really wanted was “The flickers combined to form shapes, then uncoupled and formed other shapes. The shapes, too, coupled and uncoupled until the whole space was filled with dancing,
writhing sparks” (*TLL* 53). Such was the effect that caused ‘dementia’ in him. When left alone, Anuradha talked about ‘miracles’. The first miracle was that woman, believed in Krishna to visit them to relieve their distress. This belief in her had a hoax tinge since they would never come and still she clung on to that belief. Similarly Anuradha sensed that she realized that he “badly wanted something and it is not she (me)” (*TLL* 59). This proved the fact that Anuradha had been gifted with a special vision, a vantage point high above the earth, from where she could see the melee below as ordinary men could not” (*TLL* 58).

This estimate of Anuradha about him created anger in him because she was a woman with spiritual vision of Lord Krishna. Without realizing her vision his obsession for her physical union sickened him about which she was also aware of. The exotic blue room, the strange perfume of Anuradha, her mehndi hands, the soporific sad songs, enticing dance, cajoling handling of Aftab and aromatic influence of the smoke of cigarettes they offered him, brought disgust that he felt like “letting himself touched by their decadence” (*TLL* 58). Then the conversation between them turned in the direction of another weird being ‘Gargi’. From Anuradha he was given to understand that her father was a ‘Sufi’ who lived with Aftab’s father. From where he had come “was also a matter of labyrinth of their mysterious world” (*TLL* 60). Before he became a Sufi priest, he was the prince of a small estate. Suddenly he ran away from home, took to drink and used to say “when I am drunk, Allah comes to me, stare at me but says nothing. So I drink the more. One day he will speak to me” (*TLL* 60). He becomes ill out of too much of drinking. His father sat by his side and prayed to God to cure his son one night in his vision, a dervish appeared that told him “to give up what he loved most and God will restore his son” (*TLL* 60). He woke up and decided to die in order to save his son from the jaws of death. The
miracle happened that he died and his son came back alive. Aftab’s father took him to his custody. This sounded to Som, a story resembling similar to that of Babar and Humayun story. It was his grave that was found near the cottage of Aftab. When enquired, Anuradha replied that she was not ready to argue on such matter. It was a matter of faith. In the case of women clinging to Krishna to come from his place to relieve them so far did not happen. But in the case of Gargi’s grandfather, his faith of saving his lost hope of survival of his son materialized. This was a jinx for him. But not to her. That is she vehemently condemned him that “he (you)” thinks he (you) know a lot, when in fact he (you) doesn’t” (TLL 61).

Thus Gargi’s birth had a mystic element shrouded her. He openly said to her that his purpose of visit was to be near with her and the business of buying Aftab’s shares could have been dealt with his secretary Thapar. He went to the extent of compelling her to stay her with him which she rudely refused. This itself proves the fact she as a woman pinning faith on Lord Krishna decided to save her supposed husband Aftab, for in his business, for which she was ready to interpret the role of ‘ratkirani’ and entice his adversary in order to bring him success in the endeavour of selling shares at a higher rate. For him, the trust she had on “saints, sadhus, miracle-workers, astrologers” (TLL 62) was much needed since he “did not trust himself or his men or his fate or the ceaseless travel on the social wheel” (TLL 63). The emptiness he experienced at home and noise in his office with many men ‘unknown and unknowable’ each had their own axes to grind, moved so selfishly for their private gains that they showed no real care on him, but eyed only his money. In such a situation, he needed a support like Geeta. In one of his datings, he took Anuradha to his wife. Gargi also knew his obsession for women, when he took one of the Parsi girls to the same house some days back. She now saw his boss with another woman.
He coolly explained to her how he was flabbergasted by his behaviour. When told to Geeta about this incident, she did not react violently as he had expected from her. This tendency of the giver’s attitude is taking such an ill departure from the supposed code of ethics of a decent person born for decent parents carved a niche in his heart about her conduct. Thereby, he consoled he had this affair out of a mistake caused out of drunkenness. His cottage too contained very many things of surprises that were well matched with Anuradha and La Haveli. It was in one of such rooms his mother stayed and refused to take medicines to cure her cancer. In that room, she prayed to Lord Krishna for her recovery. It was the place where she waged moral battle for her continuance of life. But she succumbed to cancer and her Krishna faith did not save her.

Both Aftab and he had families to be looked after and both had “obsession with women” (TLL 73). Som’s obsession was explained to him in an unknown language of psychiatry about which he could not make any head or tail. From the observations on his lost regular sleep he was given to understand that he had in him fear for death. Further he got a little respite in the arms of his lady love. One of the psychiatrists explained his malady that he was looking for youth. In reality it was not so that all women he loved were not young. Another doctor came with an explanation that in this world there are souls like him imagining for another soul to fulfill his desires and wants. If that soul gets the right kind of soul fulfilling his desires then there will be peace. He could not understand what that higher goal was. Even the ‘shrink’ did not satisfy him that all religions were successful if they failed to talk about the higher goal. But what that higher goal was, he did not understand. One of his lady friends Dr. Leela Sabnis who had been muddled by books as he “had been muddled by voids” (TLL 77) was a divorcee on account of her habit of reading too
many books. “As muddled as him (me), muddled by her ancestry, by marriage, by divorce, by too many books” (TLL 77). She was a polyglot. On his first making he removed a lot of books from the bed while she undressed.

Leela Sabnis too, like him, was having ‘obsessions’ her obsession was ‘explanations’. Som too was after what led to what causes and effects. She was really muddled to find a cause and its effect for his quest. “I want, I want, I want” (TLL 78). In the scheme of things as it appeared “the universe, the living, and the dead, the world seen and unseen” (TLL 78). Everything was “not irrelevant but not very relevant either” (TLL 78). She tried to explain his neurotic compulsive fornication that he had in him a dual self which experienced void on one hand and on the other he built a shell around him to protect himself. He had either faith or intuition to look at things beyond reason nor he had the faith of Spinoza “that matter and spirit embarrassed in God and flowed from Him” (TLL 81). Thus the dichotomous existence of his reason- oriented shell and void- experiencing self pulled him apart at diverse directions for which neither his knowledge of philosophy of religion nor acceptance of faith and illusion did not help him to come to grip with the essential meaning of his confusion.

His intellect did not give room to pin his faith on something higher or his total surrender to women of all types and its aftermath emotional buoyancy thwarted him to experience the void /nothing. He experienced only void with his association of Anuradha who comforted him to sleep with her that would fetch him a way through the Labyrinth for his redemption into the world of reality. From his family doctor, the protagonist came to know many details about Anuradha and Aftab. Both of them were odd couple. Dr. K. learnt from Anuradha that he was after his company. Further the house of Aftab was an odd sort of a house. He was there along with his father once.
Aftab’s wearing a diamond on his toe appeared to be another odd thing. Then he told about Anuradha whom she met many years ago.

It was he who brought her life in a flat next to him after the death of an actress who lived with an old man. She was an odd looking person. She “did not like being in the movies”, (TLL 85) Dr.K. saw her in many parties. At that time, she had an aunt at Juhu and afterwards she went away with Aftab. On one night Dr.K. got a phone call from Banaras who told him to attend immediately on Anuradha who was seriously ill at her aunt’s place. When he went there, her aunt was surprised to see him at that odd hour and informed she was laid down by smallpox that did not show any sign of seriousness. So far, when they went to her room it was locked. They broke it open and saw her lay in the bathtub in the bathroom with her wrists cut. How did Aftab come to know about this accident was still mystery to him as well as to Som.

Som’s visit to Banaras, visit to Aftab’s Haveli, and his obsessive Association with Anuradha, strange and sinister experiences he developed out of the music and dance of Azizun and her master, Gargi’s unheard of spell on him, astrologer’s weird prediction, etc created in him a sense of vacuum, loneliness, emptiness which was further augmented by Aftab’s meaning of sorrow that got out of such meaninglessness of life. Thus he experiences a strange idleness that resulted insomnia. His old friend Leela came out with a possible solution to his strange melancholy. The problem of his mental state was that he did not get satisfaction with any of his material possession that was rooted to his caste, colour and religion. Hindus craved for their identity with Godhead, “sooner or later” (TLL 113). Such a kind of identity crisis could have been the possible mental torture that created in him a vague sense of “bore whether it be his cosmopolitan life Banaras, Aftab, Anuradha, their Haveli” (TLL 113). To get away
from this obsession he took up a foreign tour with his wife. On his way back, he was found totally exhausted and was forced to take bed rest for his ‘hamming’.

After his visit from Europe and American tour, he visited Gargi. He told her all about his family as if he was cast in a magic spell uttering all before the person who enticed him. He wanted her to tell him all characteristic qualities of Azizun and Anuradha who were all behaving in an enigmatic way. At that night, she took him to Haveli where Aftab was seriously laid up. She allowed him to talk out of his breast. It appeared to be a ritual. After this ritual treatment, he left alone in Haveli to take his night rest. Gargi asked him to spend the night with Anuradha who happened to be his Shakti. It was in the Haveli room he had sex with Anuradha. She told all about her past. It was about his mother’s cruel death caused by Bihari Sherif in Gwalion who stabled her twelve times on different parts of her body and he himself hanged from a hook of a fan.

Her mother refused to marry him because she was wedded to Krishna. At this time, Anuradha’s real name was Meera. It should have been a terrible time for her if her aunt failed to take her to Bombay under her protection. In order to give her a life of safety and protection, the protagonist wanted her to flee with him to Bombay and live comfortably with him. But she was ready to come with him. He really gave her sex satisfaction and enjoyed the bed shared with him. At that crucial hour of sex, he enquired whether Aftab happened to be his rival. For this, she evasively replied that she did not know whether she was his or not but she had to remain with him. Then she showed the top of the mountain where his God was. After some time, they moved so closer that she wanted him to come to the mountain place of his God who would cure his strange disease. But he thought God was a specialist in curing only lepers. It was during one of such intimate conversations she mentioned “If I got married I could
never have worn red bangles like this” (*TLL 127*). For this, he queried, “Aftab talks as though he did marry you” (*TLL 127*).

On the day of Janmashtami, Aftab, Azizun and Anuradha took him to meet Gargi. Anuradha was in a hurry to take him into the temple. But he was not ready to see God in the temple. He continued to talk about evolution theory to Gargi who also attended the festival. Though he showed interest in the matter of science and reason, nothing had interested him except “the secrets of the universe” (*TLL 129*). Further he was very much disturbed at the idea of spirit in man that resulted in him “a strange sensibility” (*TLL 131*) or urge or drives to do him things beyond his level of comprehensions. The presence of sensibility in man is whether matter of chance or a moral influence or a mere superstition or what real meaning it has with man. He further doubted how could this factor got affected others on moral lines……His own explanation about the sensibility of man otherwise spirit in him, which if inherited from nature by man then “what is he to do with it? In other words what precisely is expected of him, of you and me, of Anuradha, of everyone else?” (*TLL 132*).

Reasonable argument presented by Darwin about evolution theory did not talk about this spirit or sensibility of man. Then Aftab told him the sensibility or spirit of man is a matter of vision. He further explained “there must be men and women who see what you want to see” (*TLL 132*). But Som did not believe in this statement. He then moved away leaving him and Anuradha alone. Anuradha came out with her explanation that Krishna began where Darwin left his argument. This statement of her sprang surprises and such of her outburst kindled his passion to hold her permanently as his paramour.

They waded through the shit ridden Banaras streets and found all people were not disgusted of such filth but desensitised with their own senses and sensibilities.
Then he insisted on her coming, her stay in the place with a man whom she did not love or care her. For this, she answered that there were many reasons about which he was not aware of. Finally he frankly told her that he could not stand the stench of the city and therefore he would never come to see her after the present visit. After a month, she came to Bombay and stayed in a posh hotel. He touched her throat and his fingers traveled between her breasts up to her navel. He was surprised to see only scars in her body but not marks of child birth. She did not say anything about Aftab. She was afraid of public calumny and he assured her that Aftab would not mind her leaving since she would choose Azizun as his partner. He expressed his desire that he wanted her badly and enquired her choice of reason in wearing only antique sarees. He appreciated her beauty for which she answered that her beauty was a screen and it should be destroyed. This means she with her beauty should stop enticing persons for the private gains of Aftab for which Gargi too had her nod. He left her in her aunt’s place at Bombay. After reaching home, he got a heart attack that made him fall with a crash.

Dr. K. narrated him all about his physical collapse and the feeling of hopelessness in the minds of himself, Geeta and Anuradha who were also there at that time. He enquired Dr. K. if Anuradha was present on the day of his illness. After knowing about it from the phone call of Geeta, what was the reason of her in not visiting him now. Anxiety of not seeing her geared Som to pay her a visit to Benaras which was not accepted by Dr. K. According to Dr. K.’s advice, he rang up to her and the call was attended by Aftab. After sometime, he gave Anuradha his phone call who was not ready to come to Bombay according to his request. Even his request for a stay with him for a day was turned down. From Dr. K., he learnt that she had planned to go to Europe along with Aftab. He tried to contact her once again through phone which
was silenced after a click. A strange thought crept into his mind that their affair should have been smelt by Aftab who would have threatened her life for this. His second thoughts pacified that Anuradha was not such a type of a woman cowed down by such threats. He believed that some mix up went through their affair that might be the possible reason on her part to keep silent. Then he confided to his wife Geeta what kind of relationship he had with Anuradha. But Geeta took his affair in a cool manner. It was this cool strength of hers that he used to admire. When he told about his affair, she flabbergasted him by saying she had already smelt such an affair ought to have existed that was showed out of her visit during his stay in the hospital. She also told him that she had written a letter to her expressing his desire to go along with her, because he wanted her and also said that she had no more interest to see him any longer.

But he becomes furious on seeing his wife becoming chummy with her, and also her devilish advancements on him. His fury turned into hysteria that resulted in his throwing a flower vase against the wall. He cried that he could do nothing without her. The way in which she treated him out of her “pretensions of unconcern” (TLL 148) got his worst out of him. Her promise to live in Bombay and all her methods to play-act the entire affair, her phone call, and her letter, now all appeared to him as nothing but hoax which he took it to be real. Now only he realized that he and Anuradha made a fool of him and he decided not to leave them just like that but to go to settle the score sooner or latter. Then he called his secretary, Mr. Thapar from whom he learnt that the shares of Aftab Company were bought by them at the first time very high and now if the company’s entire shares to be bought fully was another futile and stupid attempt. He also warned that the liquidity position of the company did not permit the entire shares of Aftab Company. If insisted on for purchase, the
entire property of his had to be mortaged and such a situation did not arise so far and if happened now, it was to be a history on the downward trend of the financial position of the company. Further there was another complication. Some of Aftab’s shares were blocked since Aftab’s father transferred some of the shares to Anuradha. What was of those shares was now a matter to be traced, which was an impossible factor since much water had flown under the bridge such similar transaction going across the period of time. Further those shares were not on stock exchange. It was not easy to identify to whom they were passed on. Only in due course of time, this matter had to be traced. What time, this due course would take, was a million dollar question. The secretary also warned him that they were in that business for more than thirty five years, and if anything anywhere went wrong would perish all their business and they would be all finished. On hearing the present state of business being at stake, he started doubting everything. From that day onwards he started fearing for everything. He also realized the fear he was subjected to was due to Anuradha leaving him.

He was born in a family who did not experience fear at all. His grand father was a civil engineering graduate from London. He gave up his public works Department job and took up building contract business that gave him rich dividends. He became rich by his hard work and courage. He usually carried thirty eight colt revolvers that gave him strength to face all oddities physically. His father faced all his odds through his reason- oriented mind. His belief that there should be a reason even for the existence of god and what reason was there to assess the existence of God. If God himself was created by some factor then how could God give explanation for many problems created out of his creations. He also remained vague at certain point since he himself could not logically establish the order of the creation and the order now prevailed in the arrangement of universe should have caused him
disappointment. Thereby, he should have had the melancholic experience and that is why all in this world too experienced a fragment of melancholy in their patterns of life. Thus his father knew the essence of melancholy which was an element enshrouded in all animate and inanimate matters, while his grandfather was go-gay type ever after feast and women to be bracketed as an epicure found his life happy and enjoyed it thoroughly without giving room to gloom and melancholy. His father happened to be a scientist who looked at truths found in things “that lie at the heart of the universe” (TLL 156). Som neither inherited his grandfather’s epicurean taste nor he was out and out to be a scientist like his father looking at the reasonableness of existence. He happened to be a womanizer and boozer and with these skills he could not assess head or tail of any matter that he faced, experienced and interacted.

At best, he was an ordinary lover smitten by the pangs of love. He could not get away from her physical charms that enticed or encircled him whatever he thought on or acted on. On one night, he got a perfumed hanky of Anuradha that drove him crazy beyond extreme. When told about this hanky and its erotic influence on him ironically, the same erotic feeling Geeta also subjected to for which there was no reason to be given for such of her conduct. Anuradha or her perfume had in them such an erotic influence on others that drove others crazy. He employed detectives to trace the missing shares. As a husband, he did not like Geeta moving freely with men in parties. She was also interested in sex. She realized then how sex would turn the conduct of a person to go crazy. Aftab met him and shared many things in common. Both spent some time in Europe. Both had interest to know about their future from Gargi. Both loved Anuradha. Both wanted their business to run on success time. Both wanted to sell and buy shares of their respective company. Both knew about the riddles of life one on mysterious line and the other on scientific line. Both had a
reputation of persons born in a rich family with a father who established their line of business on lucretative line. Now both took to drinks. Both embraced failures and disappointments. Both deserted their business. Aftab went after art, music and dance. Som went after Anuradha. Both knew the ills of themselves as well as others. In the case of Som, he had a vision that made him acquire “I want….” (*TLL 164*) but what he wanted he could not assess. In the case of Aftab, he wanted to run his business on wicked line for which he used his place, women and his apology for a wife Anuradha to seek his ends. His wickedness was in his gene that helped him to lure Som after identifying his weakness for women. He employed Anuradha for his private gains and in that attempt she lost herself in Som’s wooings and cooings. But she did not want to desert Aftab and seek her solace and comfort of Som. She remained dutiful, faithful and sincere in her attempts to entice him as if she cast a spell on him that really worked on him. As a result, he had gone crazy after her to the extent of becoming physically and mentally weak. In his meeting with Aftab, he comforted him that his faith in Gargi would make him come out of the cloud. But he was not ready to have any dealing with her on the matter of business. Further, he replied both had gone beyond the gamut of their business endeavors. Both had gone irretrievably to the point of extreme and both had the chance of escape out of death.

While Som’s passion to possess Anuradha, the passion of Aftab for her, was based on sacrifice. He knew the philosophy of sacrifice of giving something in order to achieving something. The philosophy “one can’t have cake and eat it too” (*TLL 167*). Either you can have it or you can eat it. Both the acts of having and eating are at diverse with each other. Thus for Aftab giving Anuradha was made as an act of sacrifice, which got him peace. Where as the possessive spirit of Som to have her by his side, made him to lose in the game of chess he played with Aftab, she left him
permanently after giving him a little silver Krishna flute and doll. Finally detectives found out the missing shares with the Krishna temple on the mountain. It was that mountain Anuradha always liked to go. It was the mountain that in the dream of him, his plane was crashed. It was too difficult to climb. Dr.K. and Geeta viewed the journey as a perilous one. For him, it was a matter of self realization. For his secretary Thapar, it was an urgent business deal.

Like the mystery of Haveli, this mountain climbing too would give him an inexplicable experience. In his journey through Haveli, he felt empty within. But this present journey he might feel a sense of meaningful completion. In his journey through Haveli, he was awe-struck with sensitiveness of the place. In this journey of meeting Krishna on the top of the mountain would make him feel his strange longingness ‘I want….’ a total meaning of his existence. The journey he took with Dr.K. was hazardous and challenging but he had faith that what factor was there in his survival from heart attack, would also save him from this stupendous attempt. Faith in reason was identical with faith in God. Now his faith that there existed a God to get his shares was a matter of faith which was similar to faith on reason by others. What saved him from heart attack would also get him shares. What was the assurance for his continuance of life after attack was the same promise he had to cling on in securing shares. It was to this place he had paid already a visit with Anuradha, many in that area recognized him and his stay with Anuradha in the Guest house where now he stayed with Dr.K. It was in this place he saw a boy and a yellow light. But the appearance of the light had an element of promising premonition that next day the sun would come out bright and strong and the road which was closed due to snowfall would get cleared. The boy he saw on his expedition was searching for a special kind of pebble having a star in the centre. That boy from his mother got this information
and his mind got corrupted out of such search. It was the faith inculcated in him by his
mother’s that such a pebble if possessed would bring all prosperity. For him it was not
a matter of faith of reason but faith of superstition. Had he been in his early days
chanced to meet the search of the boy for a stary pebble things would have been
different. Now he was able to distinguish faith is faith whether it be on the basis of
reason or otherwise. The boy came along with his family from Jaipur who were all
ejewellers. His grandfather was not well. He came with his uncle escorting his
grandfather while his father stayed at home to look after the shop. The boy had no
qualms to say that he would sit in the shop when he became older. They were on their
way to have a darsan of Krishna shrine, when asked by the boy what was his purpose
of visit, he replied that his visit there was only to collect shares. It was during this
occasion Dr. K. shared some secrets of Anuradha with him. Before this, Som revealed
his hearts and his passionate fascination for her.

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 the women I had known. So, at least,
I thought in the beginning. Later, it became more confused. There was
more to her than met the eye. A world spinning all by itself. I was
infatuated with this mysterious world. Here was a woman, I thought,
who could make a difference to me, to my life. The more I took of her,
the more I wanted. Until, of course, she ditched me in this awful manner and I felt like a dunce. (*TLL 189*)

After healing this romanticizing of him Dr. K. came out with his matters of his association with Anuradha. He started in such a manner, about Anuradha “Illegitimate child, insane mother, no home, molested as a child. Witness to murders, suicides, every conceivable evil of the world” (*TLL 190*).

Then she became a daughter of an industrialist and led a life of ‘desperate loneliness’ without giving her a chance to make single friend. It was her aunt, who retrieved from her shell existence. For a year or two, she managed to show her face in movies. Then Aftab came, What Anuradha saw in him or sees in him appeared to be a mystery to Dr. K. For this, Som replied that it was Gargi, mentor of Aftab got her attracted and he made a capital use of it. From Dr. K’s estimate of Aftab except his talents as polo player impressive horseman and a son of a rich man, Aftab had no element of attraction. It was his father who kept her in his house for a couple of years. She was the happiest person during that time as ill luck would have it her father died leaving them caught up in the vortex of trials and tribulations. This piece of information told by Dr. K. further disturbed him. He did not sleep that night. He heard a muffled chant on the banks of the lake. The priest chanted in Sanskrit and the slogans were the recitations usually uttered at the time of the last breath of an individual. The old man from his cot bed heard these mantras and heaved his last sigh without any pain. They took them to the lake and Dr. K. and he also followed them. It was on their way to the lake, they saw a white glacier moving down from the dark mountain. The sight of such white glacier “dejavu” (*TLL 193*) struck him dump founded. On the surface of the lake the floating glacier swiftly ran past. The old man was asked to look at the mountain top and he too would have experienced at that time
the vision of death or vision of other world that would give him peace and comfort out of the Sanskrit chanting. The boy stood by the side of his grandfather and the old man breathed his last. Som realized at that time that their purpose of visit to this place...

“Along with the old man we had all traveled to the other world, chanting, free from fear. You might as well be afraid of a train traveling from one station to another. That black lakes, those bronze cliffs, were certainly another station” (*TLL 194*).

After sometime Dr. K. came out with his explanation that it was Anuradha who informed Gargi about the protagonist in sick bed. At that time, there was no hope about his life. It was Anuradha’s attempt to beg her to save him alone worked for his fast recovery. At that time, Gargi retorted how she could do what the doctors could not. Still Anuradha persisted Gargi to do some miracles for his recovery. She went to the extent of threatening her; she without Som was an impossible entity. She also said that it was Gargi’s father who gave eyesight to Aftab’s father. She remained petrified before her until and unless she did something to save Som. Then Dr. K. continued that Gargi made a deal with Anuradha for her doings. Gargi got a promise from her that she would give up Som from the rest of her life. But either way, Som would be dead. Taking a pad, Gargi wrote a note that she could not tell him what he wanted to know. But he continued like a lawyer that at the end whatever it was that Gargi did, “as a gift for the Gods” (*TLL 206*). Anuradha left with her all jewellery and a package of shares that Som had been hunting for.

For this, she wrote that she had a package with her that was to be handed over to him according to the instructions of the secretary of the temple. Som felt miserable that both his wife and his mistress exchanged between themselves very many secrets about which he was not aware of. Gargi asked them to come and collect the bundle the next day. She also made them know that she did not know what that package
contained. She was not ready to give them any advice or explanation. From the work that he got caught up, Gargi was not ready to raise her little finger to save him. Still after having had his close encounter with godliness at the sight of the glacier floating on the lake reminded the spirit of brightness within him, his animal spirit of the “Cro-Magnons” (*TLL 133*) desire for Anuradha and shares did not leave him permanently. The element of sacrifice which alone would elevate him from all his miseries that he had to select either Anuraha or shares did not dawn on him as a permanent solution for all his maladies.

Anuradha left many things mysterious. She did not make him see his spirit inwardly. She did not give any explanation for her deserting him. She did not give him any explanation regarding his business with Aftab. She did not try to lift him to become a complete man with his faith pinned on sacrifice. She did not make him clear that life means that one has to have cake or one has to have the act of eating. Having cake and eating it is forbidden. Aftab used Anuradha for his private gains. Som wanted Anuradha for fulfilling his sex desire. Anuradha would be safe in the hands of the Aftab who would use her as a tool for his material prosperity. But Som would neither use her nor fulfill her desires. Anuradha would derive the benefit of fulfilling her desires as well as fulfilling the desires of her husband. She could never fulfill Som’s desire rooted in void of sorrow and melancholy. There may be a life having sorrow. But sorrow itself becomes a life then it is miserable both for him and Anuradha. Realizing this dilemma, Anuradha left him physically but also left with him enough money through shares. What her body failed to give him joy, her shares would compensate it with its power of money.

After his return from the hill, Som paid his visit to Haveli where he conversed with Aftab in his Blue room now totally dark on account of the absence of Anuradha.
and Azizun. Aftab found him very disappointed, since Som did not meet his much
desired Anuradha in the Hills. In the conversation, he mentioned to Aftab, that he and
she were much needed for each other and further admonished him that Aftab treated
Anuradha worse than Azizun. For this, Aftab thus replied “That is what you think. I
told you, you are different. You don’t understand us. You work by logic. By your
brain” (*TLL* 217).

Further Som disclosed to him that his company was under his control since all
shares were with him. Aftab enquired him whether he had learnt anything from this
visit to the mountain. For this, he did not answer him positively. All of a sudden Aftab
cried and his eyes welled with tears. He then left him to send Anuradha as Som
wanted her to see. After meeting her, he expressed his desire for her fleeing with him
to Bombay for which he was ready to part with all the shares of Aftab’s company. He
wanted her to wait for him next day for her flee with him. On the next day, Aftab told
him that she disappeared and her whereabouts was a mysterious matter. That day
happened to be a janmashtami day, the day of Krishna’s brith. She left the place to
have a dharsan of Lord Krishna and from the temple she did not return. Aftab decided
to seek the support of police to get her located.

Without hearing any news about Anuradha, months rolled by. Som registered
a case with Banaras police about her strange disappearance. They traced only some of
her antique clothes. It was Tarakki, car driver of Aftab who was the only evidence
who dropped her on janmashtami day at Krishna temple. Her pictures were sent to
every police station in the country. Aftab wrote a letter to him in broken sentences
where in he accused him that it was his fault to allow a snake into his place and
reposed faith on Anuradha who promised him to handle him in an appropriate
manner. With an accusing finger, Aftab charged him with all allegations that it was
because of him that Anuradha left all of them, ditched him, deserted Som and left everything in a deadly turmoil. He accused him that he would never get peace in life and after death, he would be jumping from one grave to another… for million years. Thus Som was left in a melancholic state that he wants her on his behalf to plead and beg God to save him from all his wearies, fears, doubts, dark earth and empty heavens. Thus a man totally lost the grip of faith in God and he needed Anuradha to pray for him to give peace since he has no hope in prayer and thereby no hope in God. But he firmly believes that his paramour’s prayer for him would redeem him from his wallowing sorrow. Instead of Anuradha, he has now Geeta, his wife who now offers him his much desired solace of peace and rest. This is why Gargi rightly conveys to Som “She (Anuradha) is your Shakti” (TLL 121) who transforms the hunger of the body into hunger of spirit. The last labyrinth is the realization of the existence of God or the death of Anuradha’s body and the consequent liberation of the soul of him that marches away from the darkness of Maya of Anuradha and mingles happily with the body and soul of Geeta. Commenting on The Last Labyrinth in Studies in Indian Fiction in English Walter says “Arun Joshi plunges deeper into the depths of the eternal queries that have perplexed man’s consciousness from time immemorial” (46).

What Somu fails to realize in life is “We come into this world alone and go out of it alone. The period between is short. And all those ties we cherish as eternal and long-lasting are more ephemeral than a dewdrop” (DHNT 208). The female protagonist of this novel The Dark Holds No Terror realises that the enemy of anyone is his or her own self that philosophical truth paves her way to accompany her erstwhile husband Manu to Bombay. In the case of Som Bashkar, the protagonist of The Last Labyrinth the quest of his salvation is got out of the mysterious
disappearance of his obsessive love for Anuradha, the similar salvation Sarita got out of her self-discovery. “I have been my own enemy” (DHNT 221).

In the first person narration, the novel *The Dark Holds No Terror* scans the plight of a married doctor suffering greatly in the hands of her love-marriage husband Manu during night hours out of his inhuman and animalistic sex-assault on her. Unable to bear this assault, she left him and reached her father’s place all of a sudden without informing him any of her movement. This running of her from him after giving birth to her female child Renu and male child Abi after ten years of her married life explained clearly that she bore the assault patiently for all these years hoping for a remedy which did not dawn on her. Such was the masculine vigour of her Manu that she did not find words to share with him and put reason into his mind for his conduct. This was because he proved to be a sincere, faithful, ardent, devoted and lovable husband during daytime and helped her a lot in his medical profession. As a woman who believed in gender emancipation she had no grouse against him. He gave her all freedom. He looked after their children very well. He tendered them well. He took them to school and did all that was expected of a good father and also sincere husband. In all these regular scores of duties, she could not find any flaw in his conduct and that alone prevented her from not deserting him for more than ten years.

Whatever efforts she had taken to make him believe that she was fed up with such sex assault was turned a deaf ear. Further as a girl brought up in steep tradition, she felt blushed to talk to him freely about sex with him. Even ten years of married life did not break her traditional barrier that stopped her not to open her mouth frankly and talk freely about her reaction upon his physical assault on her. This was the pathetic area that was found in the lives of many Indians traditionally brought up, lives of girls who, even after having well qualified like her with a degree of medicine,
did not, could not get enough training to speak openly about matters of sex with their own male partners for fear of their own modesty being thought out to be by their partners outraged and misinterpreted. In such a pathetic and pitiable state, the protagonist Sruthi was subjected to, resulted in her running away from her husband. On her way back to her traditional home, she saw the tulsi plant in front of her house. In the traditional Hindu family, the purpose of growing the tulsi plant is to bless the married women of the house to embrace death before their husbands and earn the name of ‘sumangali’ that is “a woman blessed to be dead before her husband in order to enter in Heaven” (DHNT 17).

The memory of her mother at the time of her return from her husband created anger in her. Her mother discouraged her to pursue her degree in medicine. Like any other Hindu women of tradition she wanted her to groom into a disciplined girl ever to remain subservient, servile, meek and humbly domesticated for tending to all duties at home and projecting her wishes, desires, likes and longings of all petty and childish feelings even during the early formative years of growth to be stifled, nipped, controlled and gagged in the altar of sacrifice for her future husband. Such a strict grooming of her mother that she was born for her husband and his desires alone her desire, his aim alone her aim, his life alone her life desensitized Saru and bore all brunt of sex assaults. She suffered this for ten long years and only after her mother’s death she could not bear this assault any longer.

This is the reason why she felt angered at the plant of Tulsi and its traditional association with the promise of women of heaven before the death of their husbands. Along with Tulsi, she also thought of her mother bitterly. It was she who brought her up, a being of so mechanically bent on duties and never taught her soft, tender and delicate feelings of love, comfort, warmth, affection and concern. Immediately after
seeing her father, Saru experienced “the familiar irritation, the familiar exasperation” 
(DHNT 17). After asking all customary questions like her arrival of train, whether on time or late, about her husband and children, he allowed her in for a cup of tea. He was not at all perturbed by his daughter’s arrival after fifteen years. He was not at all agitated why his daughter arrived who never showed her presence at the time of her mother’s death. He did not get ruffled what would be the real reason for her return with bag and baggage. This was his temperament. He was so calm, cool and collected at all time and even during the period of crisis he did not get disturbed out of his stoic temperament. To her surprise, she found a student in their house. His name was Madhav, first year in college. He was with them for two years. This boy filled the gap caused out of the emotional void of her brother Dhruva’s death who got drowned and died. Saru was greatly responsible for his death. In one of her gilded moments when her mother did not give her permission to go to a movie with her friend whose family reputation at a low ebb created rage in her. She left her home to be at a lonely place near burial ground in order to create scare in her family members. Her brother too followed her to this place much against her pleadings. Very near to the place there was a pond dug for making clay bricks that attracted the attention of the boy. He plunged into the pond hoping it only knee deep but it was so deep that claimed his life. From that day onwards, her mother thought her responsible for her brother’s death. She thought her to be the killer of her own brother. She stopped talking with her. The void between her and her mother after this incident became wider and wider.

After her brother’s death, Madhav became a suitable emotional companion to her father. He inquired about her family. Even in getting to know the family details of her own daughter Saru’s father kept a distancing tone and his aloofness spoke
volumes about his power of reticence who kept his emotions under control in order to steer the family relationship harmoniously on the rough weather of domestic disharmony set in due to her love marriage, his son’s miserable death and that of his wife’s death. Though her coming gave him a soothing balm to his void existence, he did not overtly express his filial joy exuberantly. This happened to be his temperament that saved him from all domestic storms of insurmountable dimension. It was she who informed him that she had a daughter by name Renu and a son by name Abhi who all attained schooling age. Though Saru had the right family size according to the yardstick of the public advertisement of a perfect nucleus family of joy. She did not experience any happiness out of this model size. The quantity of number in a family did not matter but the quality of relation among members of family alone mattered. In this juncture, Saru was an ill fated girl who did not enjoy any domestic peace, harmony and happiness either at her parents or her own nucleus family. Her father, mother, herself and her younger brother Dhruva comprised of a unit before her marriage. After marriage her husband Manu, herself, her daughter Renu and her son Abhi alone consisted of her family life. Here at her parental home, she suffered greatly in the hands of her traditionally bent up mother. In her family life, she suffered sex assault. Emotional attack of her mother and the sex assault of her husband threw her out of her balance resulting in emotional voidness of uncertainty, disbelief, despair and despondency. As she was tossed between the cruelties of her mother and her husband she experienced emptiness in her doctor profession that created a fear of uneasiness in her. It is because of this fear she did not even look at the face of Mandhu, her husband and their children who visited her parental home to have a glimpse of her. She knew Mandhu, her neighbor very well. But now in her sense of emptiness she did not recognize her, her lawyer- husband and
her only son. Mandhu saw Saru changed a lot. During the course of conversation, Mandhu enquired about her husband Manohar flourishing in his avocation in a customary manner that stirred Saru to answer her present state that it was because of him alone she was now with her father. In fact it was Mandhu who was instrumental in giving her courage for cultivating love marriage, “Go, ahead, Saru. Get married and to hell with all of them I’m with you both remember” (*DHNT 24*). After the marriage either Mandhu or Saru hardly had any chance of meeting though both led their lives at Bombay. Ironically Saru met her at her father’s place after her deserting her husband. Mandhu called on her as her father’s neighbour and enquired her husband’s well-being. But Saru did not want to get her husband “get off with just a few trite remarks” (*DHNT 24*). It was because her honour now was at stake. It was because of Mandhu’s visit to enquire her well-being and share her grief for her mother’s death. It was also one bordering on a professional visit enquiring about her Son’s health and eliciting her opinion about him.

In her visit Saru realized the value of drama in Mandhu’s life which “her own life lacked.” Had it been an arranged marriage like Mandhu, her husband would have been chosen by her parents. “A wedding in the midst of approving relations. Bowing down dutifully to all of them. Receiving their blessings. A child at the first lawful moment. In- laws and parents, proud and approving. Grand parents, uncles and aunts for the child who slept in her arms” (*DHNT 25*). She secretly bore the pains of love marriage which would have turned to be an arranged marriage provided that her mother approved of her partner. But she did not approve of the marriage, nor approve her daughter nor approve of daughter- mother relation. It is from Saru’s marriage with Manu without getting approval from her mother earned her total displeasure, distancing, disorientation and detachment. From the cleavage created out of her
marriage match neither Saru nor her parents especially her mother took no efforts to bridge the gap. The gap got widened keeping daughter-mother standing on two diverse sides of domestic river of love and affection without showing any mutual effort of forgiveness and its effect on long lasting, filial bondage. Her mother had no scope to find a meaning of forgiveness in her books of prayer. Nor Saru realized its worth from her experience as a doctor. Pedantic knowledge of prayer books of her mother and poetic gift of her husband did not provide any relief for her mental tension.

Her mother killed her spirit through her stoic distancing. Her husband killed her body daily with his sex assault. Mentally and physically she was thoroughly exhausted and thereby her intellect sharpened by her medicinal knowledge did not come to her at the time of her crisis. When she wanted to go and see her father after fifteen years under the pretext of enquiring about her mother’s death. Manu thus retorted “Did they let you know when she was ill? When she was dying? When she was dead?” (*DHNT* 27). This was the opportune time to inform him that her visit to her father’s place under the pretext of enquiring about her mother’s death was a hoax and the real reason was his own deed on her on every night. But she did not utter the truth. It was his eyes that appeared to be “pathetic” (*DHNT* 27), took the better part of her that choked her not to tell him truth. Instead she wanted him to forgive her for her leaving and staying with her father for a few days. She wanted “to sleep peacefully the night through without waking up with pain” (*DHNT* 27). She wanted to get away from the hell of savagery and submission. But she did not disclose her real reason and uttered the wrong word ‘forgive’. This utterance was a mark of her civilized grooming that she had been taught, trained and shaped as a Hindu woman never complaining about her husband’s ill conduct and indecent act on her during the
time of rest at night. In the hospital she had no rest during day and in night she had no rest at home. Scores of work in the hospital sapped her during day. Satisfying the casual desire of her husband drained her body and mind totally during night hours. Mental strain and physical exhaustion drove her to run away for which she sought forgiveness from her husband. What she did was not a lapse on her part from her duties as a doctor and as a wife but only her craving for rest for sometime from her routine. Instead of explaining to him all about this fatigue to her husband, she resolved to move away from him in search of total freedom and peace. This is Saru’s character. She did not listen to her mother when she wanted her to take up a soft B.Sc., and settle then for a married life. She did not show any affection for her younger Dhurva considering him a young but her blood brother. She did not care for her children’s longing after her leaving. She did not care for her prestigious profession that would come to a grinding halt if she chose to run away. She was such a selfish person even caring for her own comfort. She did not realize that happiness is not in discharging duties seriously but in sharing all her hopes, fears, likes, dislikes and expectations with others overtly and frankly.

At home she saw Madhav at close quarter. He was the son of a village priest. He wanted Madhav also to follow his pursuit but he had other plans. He wanted to study accountancy and settle down in a job. He is like her, “hated all of it, the meaningless rituals, the rites, the customs” (DHNT 31) of Brahmin family. It was the Brahminical custom that stood up as a barrier in her mother’s attitude that did not allow to serve others at meal time. The main meal was served by her and Saru was made to serve only the salt, pickles, and chutneys. Such was the dominant and domineering temperament of her mother not allowing certain duties to be shared by her own daughter in the name of cleanliness. This made her feel disgusted about such
a dogmatic customs still clinged, adhered and practised by mothers like her. As a result of such a dominating stature of Brahmin mothers, girls at home were deprived of getting groomed into all domesticities and such girls woven in such warp stood agape in their in-laws house earning their chagrin, displeasure and rebukes.

She saw now in Madhav such a claustrophobic temperament which he deftly broke out of coming out of her house and pursues his studies according to his taste. This freedom he enjoys now in his father’s house was not extended to her by her mother just because she was a female ever after tending her house and should never show her own taste in eating, drinking, speaking, interacting, studying and conducting herself before others. Even her father did not take any interest in her school or college. It is because she was a woman to be groomed and transplanted in other’s family without getting spoiled. The guarding nature of parents on female children is another Hindu Brahminical tradition. In such guarding, daughters at home are not permitted to have their choice of taste. They had to imbibe the taste of their elders—especially mothers. It was the taste of Saru’s mother to make her a degree holder. But her wish to become a doctor is an outrageous departure. She fought tooth and nail against her wish to become a doctor. The mother explained to her that her stay at Bombay during her period of study would spoil her morally, physically, mentally and intellectually. Then the profession (doctor) would make her haughty and vain-glorious. She had moved freely with men and patients that was really a threat for her chastity. Finally she belonged to a middle class family without any promising financial resources to provide her five years course of time. Saru fought against all these assaults of her mother since her father stood by her side.

Now similarly she expected her father would help her, save her husband’s sex assault. In the choice of education it is essential to give freedom for interest. In the
choice of husband and his beastial treatment, her father was left with no choice since
she had selected her partner without going through scores of details about him before
marriage. Her mother did not like her on three reasons. It was she who took her
brother Dhurva to her place of haven where he met his tragic death. It was she who
took medical profession much against her expectation. It was she who chose her
partner without caring to take her advice. In all these three matters Saru acted against
her that drove her hostile and indifferent towards Saru. His brother’s death was an
accident. But the other two conducts of her clearly bordered on her moral departure
of Hindu Brahminical family. What her mother cherished as values of the Brahmin
She blasted to pieces. Hope of reconciliation with her own daughter became a matter
of disinterestedness. In these two departures Saru’s mother went beyond the means of
forgiving her daughter. She wanted her to lead her life all alone and never interfere
with her in any matter. She thought it was a punishment for her daughter’s lapse but
in reality this dogmatic non-interference of Saru’s mother cultivated in Saru’s mind a
philosophy. “We come into this world alone and go out of it alone. The period in
between is short. And all ties we cherish as eternal and long-lasting are mere
ephemeral than a dewdrop” (DHNT 208). This philosophy of detachment got into her
that she even started doubting the efficacy of love marriage. Had her marriage been
an arranged marriage she should not suffer from loneliness. None would leave her
lonely. There were people armed to ask her husband’s sex abuse. Her children would
have benefited of having grandparents. Now Saru had suffering and guilt and there
were none at home to comfort her. The tradition of looking at children as a link to the
past and to others created in Saru one more void. She wanted children to be accepted
to themselves. They should be viewed as the products of traditional progress of a
family background. Further Saru hated to be called as Sarutai. Her brother Dhruva
used to call her in such a manner which she hated. He used to say sorry but again at the next time he used to call her Sarutai that may be “but of stupidity or forgetfullness or wicked perversity” (*DHNT 35*).

After marriage Saru felt she was trapped. She found her lover Manu totally different as her husband. What had happened to be, in her matter of love could have happened to girls in movies and books and not girls like her. But that had happened to her within a short span of time and Manu cared for her feelings as no one had ever cared. Devoid of love and warmth at home, Saru fell headlong in love. During the early period of her life she felt elated at the prospect of making love and indulging in sex day in and day out which she considered to be the proven factor of expression of true love slowly wore off after an incident that took place in her life. After attending many burnt cases in her hospital due to a factory explosion she came home tired and even that night without realizing her worth she was forced to share her body with him. It was at that time she realized her worth as a doctor whose services at the hospital were indispensably needed for saving lives of many caught in the factory accident now was reduced to the level of a cheap sex pot offering her body for animal-like husband ever after copulation after dark. Here at this juncture her personality saw its esteem, honour, regard, reverence and awe-inspiring status of a doctor crumbling into pieces as a sexpot. She felt disgusting. She felt loathsome. She felt an immeasurable hatredness on the marriage tie serving for suffering lot as a doctor is holy, sacred and sacrificial where as serving as a partner daily on a bed with a male as her legitimate husband, is despicable and despising. Her conduct as a doctor has a salutary effect. Her conduct as a wife has in her a whore effect. She feels how such a hoary Indian tradition pins its faith on marriage and its attendant value of animalistic surrender to sex. Her mother wanted her to be a true woman who ever surrenders to the sex taste.
of her husband. That is why she does not want her to become educated and thereby feel the spirit of independence. She wants her to groom as a slave ever serve the sex needs of her husband. In that service she has no say, no authority. She is the land to be ruled. She is the land to be kept down upon male authority. She has to swallow, digest and bear all sex assaults since they give happiness for her partner. She must be ready to serve sex at any time. She must tend her husband’s children. She must cook healthy food for him. She must make him strong, virile and robust with healthy food, thereby making him strong, stronger and strongest bull to assault on her. She has no choice to complain his sex abuse however painful it may be. She has to remain passive when he is very active upon her. In that context she has to remain like earth allowing ploughs to penetrate deep into her for the purpose of products of progeny. She should not complain that she as a child bearing machine ever used by her husband as an outlet of his sex desire also a provider of seeds of future generation. That is why she thus realizes.

\[ a+b \text{ they told us in mathematics is equal to } b+a. \text{ But here } a+b \text{ was not, definitely not equal to } b+a. \text{ It became a monstrously unbalanced equation, lopsided, unequal, and impossible. But is that the only reason, or would it have happened in any case, what happened to us later, he being what he is and I being what I am? I have a feeling I will never know the answer to that one. (DHNT 42) \]

Her mother did not care for her feelings and her desire during her formative years. Her father had not tenderly talked at home. In her school days she cared for books. After marriage she found Manu ever jubilant after sex. Thus she felt lonely. She felt within, ‘No room of her own’. She was made to feel that she was born for others happiness and never should care for her own personal happiness. As a result of
her loneliness she had no chance to talk to her father on the day of her arrival. She had
time to share with him only day to day routine duties and she had no time to share
with him her real purpose of visit. After seeing Madhav’s interest in gardening she
felt the pang of envy of his purposeful existence. She also saw him work under the
sun. The choice of doing work also mattered great for male and female. Her mother
during the course of conversation did not want her skin get tanned out of exposing to
sun. She too like Madhav had a taste for gardening. But this taste of her was
crumbled to pieces on account of her gender difference. She would become darker
out of exposing to sun that would blight the chances of getting her married. Further,
she was made to realize that she had no right to remain in her parent’s home like
brother Dhruva. As a male he had a different law. As a girl she had a different law.
She had to be brought up in a manner suitable to be transplanted in a far off home
after marriage. All through her younger days, she was brought up by her mother’s
strict scrutiny even in the choice of friends. After sometime she too went away after
having had her marriage, left with no peer group to share and show feelings of her
choice she reared up all alone, desolate. This desolateness geared her to get attached
to one group or another, “hoping to be taken for one of them” (DHNT 47). But in no
group she found a fitting companion nor the group identified in her any scope for
deep friendship. There by she had no choice left to know what belonging and
togetherness are.

Saru found in her mother’s life a rhythm, a harmony and a musical cadence.
This is found lacking in her life, she enjoys the bliss of independence of running away
from her husband but still she experiences only disharmony .What her mother left at
her cupboard were memorable things worthy to be remembered and cherished. But
she had now “crumbled into dust, into nothingness” \textit{(DHNT 60)}. She had no power to fight against the dead and establish victory.

Saru’s purpose of continuing as a doctor even after marriage borders on material comfort. In this context, Saru felt totally exhausted to interpret double role both as a doctor outside and as a wife in her domestic front. Her husband cleaned whereas she had to cook. Cooking sapped her energy. She became tired. Her doctor profession demanded much energy. After having had her energy spent at hospital and home, she had none left to share with her husband on bed which he expected a routine matter everyday. She felt very bored for her fragmented living. Her husband thought of sex a source of happiness for both. He never realized it was a torture to her. Nor she openly shared her grief on this matter. Her traditional brought up of offering happiness through sex a ritual affair stood in her way in telling him openly her malady. He believed offering sex a must for husband to make her life happy. What is happiness to him is her dryness of fatigue. What is her silence on sex is his sign of accepting it as a source of happiness. Both lived in an illusory world of providing sex for each other comfort of rejuvenation for next day’s routines. In reality, Saru felt bored of his giving and he felt happy out of receiving. Manu was a hero in the college. He had a knack to gain reputation among pretty girls. He created among students the thrill of his choice of a girl student in a given year. What he aspired was not pretty girl alone as his partner but a girl of intelligence. The teacher who taught her pediatrics also taught her to overcome all her rural nervousness rooted in a stranger touching her body, a hineous act outraging her modesty, shaking and crumbling her into pieces but Manu bears witness to such an act. But now both take the acts of teacher touching her a casual matter and both realize such of his act an act of sophistication to be accepted, adjusted and acknowledged for one’s advancement in life. Among other pretty girls of
Manu’s choice they were all only physically attractive and none had the intelligence of Saru to become a doctor, though ‘not as open sesame to prosperity’ is the stepping stone for specialization after M.B.B.S. for which the teacher’s help is very much needed.

Climbing on the professional ladder, Saru learnt the tricks of getting herself adjusted to his teachers’ taste and that lifted her up on economic status. After having achieved the required fame Saru slowly started showing distance from the teachers under the pretext of her reputation as a doctor might have got blighted out of his unnecessary intrusion. It was the essential aspect of man to protect his wife from vultures around her created in her void. Though he performed sex on her as a routine matter he never cared to master his strength and drive away other men trying to have sex with her. This temperament of him allowed her teacher to tease her. Saru too bore the teasing of that dirty teacher till she grabbed a place of fame of her own. She needed to attain such a financial heraldry of station on account of her daughter and son. Manu’s earning was meager and with that amount they could not even lead a hand to mouth existence. For providing good shelter, food, dress, education and other such comforts they needed money. Saru realized this fact and like a true Indian woman she bore her powerfully influential teacher’s abnormal teasings much against her wish and achieved her place of success out of sacrificing her personal honour. Her husband, though realized how much emotionally torn and hurt she would have been in such an inhuman treatment of her teacher, brushed it cooly as if it is all a matter in the game of getting one’s success and not a big loss in one’s honour. Saru was brought up in a traditional background where her mother cared for her personal honour not to be ravaged and ravished at any point of time. But now her choice of her partner Manu coolly watched on her progress and never offered a soothing word of
comfort for the great sacrifice of staking her for family’s betterment. When asked by her mother about Manu at the time of marriage. She telling her wish about marrying Manu she enquired her whether he a Brahmin or any social standing of his own. When she replied that his father owned a cycle shop, her mother came out with the expression that he belongs to low-caste. The choice of selecting him as her partner greatly came to her out of her mother’s negative influence. In the name of protecting her honour and family honour, her mother did not allow her to enjoy even trifle freedom that a daughter of her age ought to have enjoyed at home. She was kept as a caged prisoner at home without having scope to indulge in her wish fulfillment. When she realized the true nature of Manu a desensitized being caring her for her monetary status and using her daily for gratification of his lust she was driven to the extent of considering herself a creature only half-alive.

Saru’s mother had no element of reconciliation. After her marriage with Manu, she cut all her ties with her. She did not take any steps to communicate to her. She even told her neighbours that she had no daughter. Such was her anger on Saru that Saru herself could not digest. Such an anger of her on Saru was rooted in Indian womanhood. She expected her daughter to be humble, slavish and subservient to her tastes, temperaments and choice of getting her life and her marriage partner. She wanted her to do B.Sc., that too a gesture of her partial acceptance in giving her a scope to go out, mingle with society and be back at home after dusk. She is not ready for giving too much independence especially in the matter of her pet wish of becoming a doctor. She believed such an education would disturb the family stability of order, discipline and female honour. She believed her daughter would get spoiled out of such studies that would bring disaster to her and also to her family. Her mother feared for her honour as well as family honour. Her mother feared for the breach of
her traditional glory that would bring total disharmony and disintegration. She feared
her reputation as a girl born in a rich traditional background would be nipped in the
bud without blossoming into a scented flower of chastity, humility, and piety.

What her mother feared for had happened to Saru. Her education did not give
her scope “to tag on to him and drift a small boat towed by a larger ship” (DHNT
117). She did not remain like her mother like a boat tied to a large ship of her father
but drifted herself in the course of sea of life, aimless and directionless leaving her
status, her profession, her family and children agape and embracing herself into
insignificant voidness of nothingness. Her mother kept herself away from her ties
with her husband still she did not desert her husband and family. She adhered to her
domestic duties strictly and sincerely. She showed her discontent only with her. She
showed her anger to her husband when he allowed her to do degree of medicine
without sensing or seeing its consequences. What her mother thought of allowing her
pursuing her education on medicine and led to her independent choice of her life
partner that further led her to series of intricate problem. Her thought foresaw all
these tragedies of Saru foreboding for which she did not have in a soft, mild and
intelligent manner. Had she warned her daughter in a mild tone, Saru would have paid
to her softly. Her stinging remark, her pungent expression, her choleric temperament
and her wrathful conduct alone stood in her way in not imparting reason into her
daughter’s mind. She preferred choleric temper suitable to make her daughter
understand her values of female discipline and decorum. But to Saru, her hostile
temperament alone created in her total hatredness. The value of adjustment in a family
became an alien factor for her that resulted in her running away from her husband
after fifteen years.
For her, Manu’s taste for journalism, writing stories and poems are all evanescent matters “that were so soon forgotten” (DHNT 152). Such an avocation did not bring permanent income. For sometime Manu too was jobless and she considered an unemployed husband “a nightmare, a horrible humiliation” (DHNT 152). That is why she allowed him to take up lectureship assignment in a third rate college that would atleast get him a fixed monthly income and a status. Before marriage, she had her fascination for such people like Manu living in their world of imagination far away from matter- of- fact people. But after marriage, she realized the realities of life and to run a family writing stories and getting a meager income alone would not be sufficient. Such artists like her husband might provide enchantment out of their imagination for others but their personal lives would be a miserable hand to mouth existence, very difficult to manage. With regard to art, all matters of enchantment of artists slowly wear off from her since they are products of words; words and words “obscuring the very meaning of life” (DHNT 155).

Saru had also an inkling of idea that her father Babu too dissociated from her all these years not because of her love marriage but because he considered her responsible for his son’s death. She could not bear the thought of she being “not a wife, not a mother, not a professional woman whom others looked up to. She was the wronged child again, the unloved daughter, the scapegoat” (DHNT 182). Though her father tried to comfort her that it was an old story Saru charged him with accusations that she a “daughter of inconvenience, a nuisance and it suited him (you) not to have her there” (DHNT 182) and that alone prevented him not to ask her once what really had happened. Both considered Saru guilty without enquiring the reason of the incident. Infact Saru tried her best to save him but she had no strength to save him. It was her choice of going to that desolate place along with her brother that caused grief.
It may be an act of disobedience but the punishment for it was disproportinate to her breach of conduct.

Saru broke all the traditional ties like the woman bold enough to ride on a motor bike and at the same time felt how cowed down upon by the same traditional ties binding her to stoop to move, act and function like a puppet in the hands of males. Her mother was not a talkative person. She believed that one had to remember always that he or she did not belong. It was her stoic tolerance that geared up her life. She expected the same from her daughter. This stoic tolerance was either ingrained or taught or tutored to all Indian women folks to lead a supposedly harmonious life after their marriages. This is found missing in modern women, owing to their education and economic independence. It was great shock for her father that her mother nourished such a vengeful hatredness against her husband about which, when she related to him, was really shocked to hear. Why she did not show that hatredness to him was her practice of stoic tolerance.

Now Saru did not want to go back to her husband. It was her own choice of having Manohar as her husband, her own choice of giving birth to Renu and Amith, her own choice of becoming doctor and on all these occasions she never allowed anyone even her own parents to advise her, guide her and conduct her through throes. Now after fifteen years of her marital experience, she returned home and wanted her father to provide solace and comfort. Whatever might be her mother’s ill – treatment as educated girls, Saru ought to have paid her visit for her mother’s funeral. She discarded her as if her mother was her arch enemy. She had the chance of telling her father about the strange case of her husband who thought his sex act “during night he did not know to himself during day” (*DHNT 203*). It was a strange case. There was a “blackouts about certain action” (*DHNT 203*). She had no person to share. Her
mother was totally estranged at that time. Such a delicate matter about her husband’s weakness or disease is not a matter to be shared with friends not even among her doctor colleagues. Left with no choice she ran away from him. Now she hears her husband’s visit to take her back home. In her there is an emotional streak of her mother. It is this streak that prevents her from not looking into the reasonable part of her husband’s malady. Her mother is an uneducated illiterate. She finds no reason in her son’s death. Till death, she believes that Saru alone is responsible for his death. She refuses to look into the reason of her husband. Where as Saru is a doctor- she has to stay at home and find solutions to her malady. Running from a problem or deserting a family may give her only a temporary relief. She slowly realizes when her father enquires her what she expects him to do. Manu looks after his wife like a true husband. He never tries to desert her. He never runs away. He keeps her company. He gives her comfort and solace. He never complains her unreasonable anger on their daughter. He knows she is a patient to be properly looked after. So also is the case in Saru’s husband. If her mother is sick physically, her husband is sick mentally. It is her responsibility to get him cured. Her mother is now dead and disappeared into darkness. But she, though puppet in the hands of destiny, of her own making, can be made to dance casting aside all the shadows of marriage and sex as disintegrated matters hopefully allowing her mother’s point about her marriage with Manohar failure- a matter of right but at the same time bringing significance to the movement dance as a pair of wife and husband, as a pair of parents and children and also as a pair of a doctor and patients. In that dance the personal tie of husband and wife, the family tie of parents and children and the social tie of doctor and patients culminate into a meaningful whole based on reason without giving room for any unwanted,
unbiased, unbiogated aspects of life worthy to live, worthy to cherish and worthy to make all happy and harmonious.

After having had a discussion with her father, she decided to join with her husband Manu. She was expecting Manu but before that Ravi, a child living a few houses away, came and began to drag her saying that Sunita was having fits and she would die if she didn’t go with him at once. She was moved to compassion and ran to Ravi’s house. But she asked her father while going out- to ask Manu to wait, as she would come back soon. After being a failure all along, she, finally emerges triumphant with the discovery of her identity as a woman. When the realization that she is her own refuge dawns on her, she experiences a ‘euphoric’ sensation, ‘a feeling of weightlessness’ and consequently “her fears fade into insubstantial ghosts” (DHNT 219). She discovers her true self, her real identity and feels so calm and composed that she admits to her being ‘the guilty sister, the undutiful daughter, the unloving wife’ and accepts all “these selves to become whole again” (DHNT 220). What she draws from her self-discovery is ‘My life is my own’ and she is relieved to find the connecting link in this hard learned lesson.

The novel depicts a realistic picture of modern India society. Though we have adopted modern styles, our psychology remains tradition oriented resulting in strains and conflicts of different types. The problem with Saru was that though she had acquired high level education and had adopted outward modes and styles of living, her psychology had remained tradition bound. She forced Manu to become a college teacher rather than remain a journalist because traditionally, college teaching was considered more respectable than journalism. This change from journalistic profession to college teaching killed all spirit in Manu and gave rise to other problems. She despised him for the fact that she was earning bread as well as butter for the family
because traditionally it was supposed to be Manu’s job and Manu also reacted so aggressively to Saru being given so much importance outside the house because traditionally men were supposed to be more important than woman.

This entire process of self analysis made Saru realize that it was her sense of superiority over Manu that had destroyed their relationship. She also realised that, women are charged with greater responsibility as they are required to play more challenging roles. The size of the family has become nucleus as a result of the upheaval caused by various socio- economic changes brought about in the post colonial times. As a result, the emotional- support- base of the children has become very narrow. It is the woman’s responsibility to see that this base becomes deep and solid. She must bring up her children with greater understanding and form a bond of friendship with them. The same applies to her relationship with her husband. A relationship of mutual trust and confidence has to be built. The changing times require her to play roles exceeding the confines of the house. This requires that she maintains the delicate balance between her own and her husband’s self- hood. This is the message Shashi Deshpande conveys in all her novels- that relationship within the family needs to be built on human values of understanding and trust rather than on the prescribed rules of discipline.

In these two novels, the motivating and sustaining forces are the realization of worthiness of togetherness of husband and wife; the wife Geeta is the abiding force of togetherness for the husband, Som Bhaskar, in The Last Labyrinth and Manu the anchorage husband of the family ship as the greatest solid support on the bedrock of mutual sharing of life’s grieves and joys for the wife Saru in The Dark Holds No Terror.
The quest for self-discovery after a series of ebb and flow, interactions with many, the essence of his craving desire ‘I want I want …’ finally culminates in possessing wealth but not his pet woman Anuradha subjucates Som Bhaskar that in ones life one can have cake or eat cake but cannot perform both the acts- successfully, a fact based on reason and this reason is also a fact in the existence of God, the deciding factor in having or eating the cake. Similarly in the case of Saru, it is in the matter of accepting what one has to perform in one’s life not by deserting or discarding the family ties but by embracing all without caring individuals defects, lapses and drawbacks.