CHAPTER V

THE CRY FOR CULTURAL COEXISTENCE:
SOME INNER FURY PLEASURE CITY
THE LAST LABYRINTH.
Deculturation and assimilation are the two extreme wings of cultural interaction. When two cultures encounter, several reactions work simultaneously, but in certain cases a distinctive response outlasts other auxiliary manifestations. If possession rejects the possibility of an artist flourishing in an alien soil, and adopted cultures, Some Inner Fury of Markandaya and The Last Labyrinth of Arun Joshi illustrate a movement towards assimilation. Complete assimilation is an impossibility and no novel by any Commonwealth novelist has yet been able to record such an experience. In many cases, however, a copresence of the two becomes the reality. Ambivalence is a recurring and happy experience because it takes cognizance of both the ways of life, of both cultures. In this age of growing global cooperation and understanding the human cry for cultural coexistence has become very relevant. If complete cultural assimilation is impossible, total insularity against other cultures is undesirable and smothering for a culture. Culture is a dynamic process and hence it has to grow and change. Kamala Markandaya and Arun Joshi are also sensitiv
to this facet of cultural dynamics and thus have articulated the subtle copresence of two cultures in our life. It can be meaningfully portrayed in terms of the meeting of two races, the ethnic juxtaposition or in terms of two ways of life representing the spirit of the West and the East. In Markandaya's *Some Inner Fury* the encounter has been explored in terms of races and in Arun Joshi's *The Last Labyrinth*, the encounter has been configured through two stances of life.

In *Some Inner Fury*, cultural dualism forces its channel through the dilemma of personal relationship and racial prejudice. Like E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India*, Raja Rao's *The Serpent and the Rope*, Achebe's *No Longer at Ease*, Lamming's *Pleasures of Exile* and Anita Desai's *Bye-Bye Black Bird*, *Some Inner Fury* explores the myriad crusts of human relationship in the context of ethnic juxtaposition. Forster's *A Passage to India*, enumerates the disruptive effect of imperial politics on the British resident of India, *Some Inner Fury* depicts with greater tenderness how private personal emotion is muted and individual love ruined by confusing, convulsive, political upheaval. The novel explores the interaction between two individuals belonging to two races, two nations and two cultures with admirable understanding.

Like *Nectar in a Sieve* and *Possession*, *Some Inner Fury* is a first person narrative written in an autobiographical mould. But Mira, the heroine of the novel is different from
both Rukmini and Anasuya. Mira is an educated and sophisticated girl and thereby she is on a vantage point in comparison with Rukmini. She imbibes virtues of both cultures. Anasuya is also equipped like her, but she is not the heroine of the novel, nor is she so positive. The novel unfolds the stream through Mira's consciousness. Her autobiographical narrative is the result of emotional upset:

I had not been home for a long time, and so I had forgotten the little silver box lying in my cupboard which no one ever touched. A beautiful thing of filigree, with raised design of lotus flowers which I knew was there though I had to feel for it with my fingertips, it was so worn away. I opened it, and inside was the scrap of material I saw torn from Richard's sleeve, from his upper arm where the flesh was like milk... The dust was still... I trembled like a coward standing there... and then the slow pain came seeping up, filling my throat with grief, flowing from throat to temple.¹

She recalls the tale of her life and family with emotional tenderness. She belonged to an educated, moderately forward Hoffasai family. Kitsamy is a thoroughly westernised son who brings with him British mannerism, Oxford gossip and British acquaintance Richard Marlowe. The family consists of the reticent father, quietly efficient Amma, the young Mirabai, the silent Govind, the garrulous uncle and the ubiquitous Dodamma.
They receive Richard with courtesy and good grace. Their house looks forward to western modern ways of life:

The house itself was equipped to cope with both Europeans and Indians: there were two dining rooms, two kitchens, even two sets of servants, the one lot knowing Indian cookery and service, the other trained by European memsahibs, knowing how to deal with such abominations as meat and capable of waiting at table.  

Mira is the youngest and therefore the ablest to withstand the heat and strains of outings. She accompanies Richard frequently and gradually she develops intimacy with Richard. The mother dislikes this intimacy but she does not know how to express it without being rude.

After Richard's departure, the family selects a bride for Kit. Fremala is brought to the family to be approved by the members. Fremala is a typical Indian girl, shy and conventional by nature. She endeavours to change herself according to the taste of the westernised family. Their marriage is performed with a lot of pomp and show but it reaffirms Fremala's personal virtues of simplicity and religiosity. Roshan, one of Kit's westernised friends, leaves a mark on the people by her unconventional but lovable nature.

Kit takes up a job, settles down in a state capital and invites Mira to visit her. Richard also visits simultaneously.
Mira gets acquainted with Roshan, likes her work and decides to work for her paper. In the process of preparing a report on a report on a peasant resettlement in a neighbourhood, she comes across Richard at the government house. He takes her to the model village and shows her around. Their intimacy grows into love. Kit is a popular and responsible officer and he is frequently at the centre of social activities, but Premala is unable to adjust herself to the world of Kit. Kit suggests that she might find distraction in a visit to the village in Mira's company. It is thus Premala comes to get involved in the progress of school building which is the dream of Hickey.

In the meantime the silent, introvert Govind takes to civil disobedience. He turns into a champion of violence and seeks Roshan's support for his activities. When he faces the charge of burning the gazette, Roshan rescues him by swearing that he had been in her house in the night of the incident. To give a reality to this lie, they start living together.

Richard who was on an official tour, comes back suddenly with a bout of malaria and six weeks leave. He goes with Mira on a "honey moon," part of the way by car and later by any mode of transport that comes across. They go south to the end of land at Kanyakumari with nothing more than a single suitcase between them, eating and drinking wherever they could, finding simple shelters, making love and enjoying life. They enjoyed their life as a thrill. But the dream is broken by
an acid bomb aimed at Richard as he stands at the empty bazar of the city. He has to face abusive posters warning the foreigners to leave.

There is a party at the government house where Kit goes with Mira as Fremala has left for the village. During the party there comes a high gale and power breaks down, and natives rush to the dance hall. Goving is with them demanding to know where Fremala is. Learning that she had gone to village, he drags them urgently to the ear and they rush to the village in the rains. By the time they reach there, the school building is on fire. Fremala is dead in a room of the burning school, Kit turns round on the associates of Govind who had been responsible for fire and abuses them and rushes out towards his car. But a knife is thrown from among the crowd and Kit dies in the hands of Mira.

Hickey proclaims that he has seen Govind throw the dagger that killed Kit. Govind is arrested and put on trial. The whole proceeding depends on Hickey's words against Mira's. Mira seesars that she had thrown her arms around Govind as Kit left the hut and therefore it is impossible for him to have thrown the dagger. Hickey reiterates that he had seen Govind throw the dagger. Before the issue could be decided the court is mobbed by slogan-shouting crowds and Govind is taken away. Mira also realises that it is no longer possible for her to keep herself aloof from the people of her own age and maintain
her relationship with Richard. And therefore she leaves Richard behind and joins the crowd:

Go? Leave the man I loved to go with these people? What did they mean to me, what could they mean, more than the man I loved? They were my people—those others were his. Did it mean something then— all this 'your people' and 'my people'? Or did it have its being and again its strength from ceaseless repetition? They are nothing to you, cried my heart. Nothing, nothing. If you go now there will be no meaning in anything, ever more. But that stark illuminated moment—of madness? of sanity?—Went, and I knew I would go, even as I knew Richard must stay. For us there was no other way, the forces that pulled us apart were too strong. 3

The story brings home several important factors. Different characters stand for different situations, values and attitudes. A detailed analysis of the characters and their symbolic dimensions will reveal the central message of the novel. The characters who constitute the *dramatis personae* of the novel *Some Inner Fury* are Kitsamy, Premala, Govind, Roshan, Richard and Mira. K.R. Chandra Shekharan goes to the extent of describing *Some Inner Fury* as a war cry against Britain. 4 Mr. A. V. Krishna Rao comments that,

Markandaya dramatises in this novel not only the political upheaval that wrecks the inter racial love of Mira and Richard but also the moral nihilism of the generation of Anglophiles of which Kit is the representative. 5
Stephen Heine\textendash{}way remarks, "Markandaya deftly shows that it is British superiority and lack of understanding which provoke the violent reactions from many Indians."\(^6\) And declares that the novelist fails to wrestle the deeper implications of social situation created by western impact. There are indeed varying opinions about the implication of the encounter between two races and two cultures. But a careful reading of the novel reveals that Markandaya shows an authentic, objective and balanced approach to Indo-British relationship. The novel explores the ambivalence of inter racial relationship, or cultural dualism.

Kitsamy is a westernized character imbuing the worst that the West has to offer. He is an anglicised Indian. Loyal to the western culture and impatient with Indian traditional lodes and values represented by Dodamma, Mira, Fremala. He is self-centred, self-indulgent, unmindful of hurting others. He can be compared with Sanad Shivpal of Nayantara Sehgal's \textit{A Fire to be Happy}, and Krishnan of \textit{The Dark Dancer} by B. Rajan. Sanad Shivpal is the son of the rich man, a product of the public school and an executive in a mercantile firm, facing the problem of regaining his roots, of belonging. It occurs to him that his parents have gone to a great deal of trouble and expense in moulding him to be a figure that will never have a reality. He makes his dilemma clear when he says:
I don't belong entirely to India. I can't my education, my upbringing and my sense of values have all combined to make me un-Indian, what do I have in common with most of my country men? 7

In The Dark Dancer, Krishnan comes back from Cambridge to India which has an indifferent sky for him. His sense of alienation is apparent from the beginning. But in spite of his constant hair splitting analysis of the unreasonable demands of society he submits to every family decision. He wants to belong but his marriage is ruined by his waiving between Cynthia and Kamala. He himself analyses the difference between them:

She (Cynthia) came from a tradition which included non-conformity and dissent amongst attributes... His on the contrary was a background completely conformist where the map of one's life was drawn even before one's first cry. 8

Krishnan suddenly discovers the basic difference between them and finds the right path.

Kitsary is similar like Krishnan and Sanad Shivpal in his western orientation, but his westernization is deeper than theirs. Meenakshi Mukherjee rightly remarks that, "Kit is entirely a product of the west and emerges as a stereotyped Burna Sahib." 9 He is impatient with Fremala for her insufficiencies even during their courtship but he marries her.
They are never able to make a harmony between them and therefore Fremala divorced herself by her social service activities. In fact, the lack of perfect harmony in domestic orbit throws her, out to the bigger world of public works. There is, however, something pressing forth from the unconscious of Kitsamy. He is fully westernized but he treats his wife in the manner in which typical Indian husband does. He lacks that considerateness which thoroughly westernized Indian may be expected to show. In his character there is no conscious desire for belonging to the soil as we find in Sanad or Krishnan. In him the influence of the West is not skindeep; it is in his mental make up. Consequently he fails to emerge as a real, living, round character in the milieu of Indian society of which he is a part. He is a symbol of the inflections of the West and since he has thrown his roots into the alien rocks, he remains an outsider, a fringe character in the novel.

Fremala is the sweetest and most clearly Indian character in the novel. Prof. Iyengar describes her as the most heroic character of the novel. Meenakshi Mukherjee is of the opinion that "she is idealized to the extent of being unreal." In truth, Fremala is a home-spun, devout Hindu, innocent, modest and unpretentious, universally loved for her sweetness and charm. She finds no place in the westernized world of Kit. As a result she grows lonely and satisfies her motherhood by possessing an orphan girl. But this orphan is not able to quench her desires. Kitsamy is sensitive to womanhood in her.
Govind could sense this even before the marriage and Premala is aware that he is aware. But she cannot take a lover, nor would Govind be a person to approve it. She sublimates her feelings in her school work. At a time when Kit and Premala have grown far apart, she is asphyxiated - the innocent victim of a political act, the burning of the village school and Kitsamy is stabbed finally in the aftermath. Both are invested with symbolic qualities. Premala is silent but strong "Mother India who is compassionate sufferance." Kit on the other hand is, "the complacent, well placed, upholder of the old order, the crutch on which British India leaned too heavily."

Premala is a representative Indian woman, a recurring character in Indo-English novel. She is like Kamala in The Dark Dancer and Laila in Sunlight on a Broken Column, showing the qualities of mysterious strength, sense of sacrifice, a belief in non-violence exuding the smell of the soil. In the failure of relationship between Kit and Premala we may discern the refusal of basic Indian values to be dominated by westernization. Kitsamy is a symbol of the superficiality, slavish mentality and lack of oneness with one's own country. In other words, he crystallizes worst that the Western culture can give. Premala, on the other hand, symbolizes the virtues of Indian life and culture. It is obvious that the works of the western culture cannot be absorbed in the fabric of Indian life.
Govind is the next important character who contributes to the development of the story and opens up a new dimension of racial relationship. Right from the beginning he is out-lived in sinister colours. He is silent, forbidding and converses in mono-syllables. He disapproves Kit's westernized traits. He is fanatic in his love for his country and holds everything in contempt which is alien from his point of view. Kira describes his attitude to the western influence on India in most clear terms:

Govind was not and had never been a part of it. To him it was the produce of a culture which was not his own - the culture of an aloof and alien race twisted in the process of transplanta-tion from its homeland, and so divorced from the people of the country as to be no longer real. For those who participated in it he had a savage harsh contempt.  

Govind "seems doomed to be the recipient of God's dis-favour." He not only detests Kit for personal and political reasons, he also dislikes the well meaning English missionary: To him missionaries were not merely men who assaulted the religion which was his, though he might not cherish it, impugning its austere dignities in a hundreded ways; they were also white men, who not only set up their alien and unwanted institutions in the land but who, for the preservation of these institutions sided with
those other white men who ruled the country,
and with whom otherwise they had little in
common. 15

The politics of violence and non-violence finds an
apostle in Govind and he resorts to every possible device to
free his country from the clutches of the British rulers. Ul-
timately he is arrested for Kit's murder and faces a partial
and inconclusive trial reminiscent of Aziz's experience in
A Passage to India. Mira, torn between loyalties to the dead
Kit and the living Govind points out an ethnic truth: "Govind
belonged to his country and Kitsamy didn't." 16

Govind is the symbol of hostility to British rule and
western culture. The hatred against the alien rule finds an
expression through his violent acts against them and his dis-
like of the western culture is vindicated by his reaction to
the character of Kitsamy and deep understanding for Fremala.
His silent love for Fremala is an indirect vindication of
his clining to the essential spirit of Indian culture. In
his character Kamala Markandaya creates a representative of
a large section of Indians who held radical opposition to
both British rule and alien culture.

Roshan is another fascinating representative of Quit
India campaign. As a contrast to Fremala she is a sophisti-
cated woman with glaring stubborness and a remarkable degree
of sensibility. Unlike Fremala she represents the virile and
the assertive side of the feminine. She is a liberated modern woman of India, having been educated in England and tended on western values, she is, in fact, a product of dual cultures, "Born in one world, educated in another, she entered both and moved in both with ease and non-challenge." Though she has assimilated western culture and education, yet she has a truly Indian heart. She takes willing participation in political struggle against Britain. When she is released after serving a term of imprisonment and Mira asks her if she was sorry for having served a sentence, she gives a bold reply:

What do you think? Of course I'm not sorry. I'd rather go to the devil my own way than be led to heaven by anyone else. And I wouldn't give up being free like that for anything it hasn't always been that way - No, not even for me.18

Roshan resembles Rajeshwari in the novel Kandali, the Patriot, for both of them are symbols of resurgence of Indian women in the wake of national movement. Roshan helps Govind and plays big sister and provides a liberating influence throughout the novel. She serves as the hovering angel at the eleventh hour as she directs the mob and frees Govind from the British Court. In Roshan we find the reality of culture coexistence, the truth of ambivalence, neither rejecting a culture fully nor accepting another in totality. The attempt is to accept both with understanding and reason. This facet of reality finds its best expression in the relationship between Richard and Mira.19
The relationship between Richard and Mira is the nucleus of the novel and the central key to Markandaya's exploration into racial relationship. Richard is an unconventional Englishman endowed with sweetness and light of western enlightenment. Chandrashekharan rightly remarks that he represents Kamala Markandaya's "warm appreciation of the Englishman as an individual." He is not atypical representative of British Raj in India; to the contrary he is remarkably sensitive and sensible. Almost throughout the novel he stands as a contrast to the character of Kitsamy. He is always willing to adapt himself to the alien environment without discarding his own rich sensibility. Through his one month's stay he endears himself to all the members of Kit's family. He is a perfect gentleman and an ideal lover. He is cautious to the point of visiting Mira's home to seek her mother's consent for their marriage. Mira is his emotional counterpart. The relationship between Richard and Mira is an ideal possibility of cultural coexistence. Mira is the central consciousness of the novel, a most round character with sensitivity and imaginative vigour. She is brought up in a westernized household where they have two dining halls and two sets of cooks, where the members frequently visit clubs and participate in dance and song. She is an educated modernized conscious Indian woman who can afford to honour personal relationship unhurt by racial differences. When they are enjoying their life in the honeymoon part of the novel, in the bazar, a bomb is thrown on Richard and anti-
British slogans and posters are shown everywhere, Richards is disturbed. She tries to convince him:

Richard...You musn't think... this feeling isn't for you. Or or for people like you... must believe me, I would not lie to you. Listen to me, I've told you... This feeling isn't for you. Do you think I don't know?²²

Richard asks: "Do you really think people can be singled out like that? One by one, each as an individual? At a time like this? - After two days."²¹ The situation grows more sprawlingly critical and the time comes when Mira can hold no longer. She has to make a choice between joining the procession of Indian patriots and staying away from it with Richard, she realizes that they cannot stay together.

When the tail of the procession went through the door, I would join it, and Richard would stay behind. This was not a time for decision, for he knew he could not come with me, and I knew I could not stay: it was simply the time for parting.²²

The people in the procession may not have any individual reality for her, but she cannot resist the pull of the procession because it has got the sanction of racial and national consciousness. She reflects.

They were my people— those others were his. Did it mean something then all this 'your people' and 'my people'? Or did it have its
being and again its strength from ceaseless repetition? They are nothing to you, cried my heart, nothing. If you go now there will be no meaning in anything, ever more. But that stark illuminated movement - of madness? of sanity? - Went, and I knew I would go, even as I knew Richard must stay. For us there was no other way, the forces that pulled us apart were too strong. 23

This passage is reminiscent of the famous last line of _A Passage to India._

It appears that the novel ends on a note of disunion, but the truth is that it concludes with an intense awareness of love, tenderness and understanding. Its real meaning can be brought to focus if it is compared with Manohar Malgonkar's _Combat of Shadows_, Raja Rao's _The Serpent and the Rope_ and Anita Desai's _Bye-Bye Blackbird_ because all these novels cut across various cursts of human relationship against the backdrop of ethnic encounter. In all these novels, the central motive is to explore the dilemma of personal relationship and racial prejudice in terms of sex, love and marriage. _Combat of Shadows_ is a story of Henery Winton, a British plantation manager and Ruby Miranda, a beautiful Anglo-Indian girl whom he appoints as a school teacher to break the loneliness and monotony of planter's life in the remote corner of North Eastern Assam. Ruby feels unwanted and rootless in India and thus tries to become Henry's wife with a view to escaping from the brown
world and entering into the world of the white. Henry Winton finds in Eddi Trevor an Eurasian rival he cannot bear with. He goes to England for vacation and comes back married. Stung by the disloyalty of Winton, Ruby swears to take revenge. She gets a suitable chance when Jean, Henry's wife falls in love with Eddi and decides to marry him. Before the marriage could take place, Eddi gets killed by an elephant and Jean goes away. Thoroughly experienced, Henry Winton now gets genuinely interested in Ruby and would like to marry her. But Ruby has a different plan and she gets Henry killed in the fire with the help of the village men.

The relationship between Ruby and Winton is radically different from that of Richard Marlowe and Mira. To Henry, Ruby is,

... the rare mixture of the submissiveness and the surrender of oriental womanhood with the freedom and gaiety of the West and of course the breath taking figure and good looks and colouring which had been a gift of both the West and the East. She was not the kind of woman who analysed your shortcomings; Ruby Miranda was content with him the way he was, even prepared to sacrifice the love of her childhood sweetheart for him.²

Behind the attitude of Henry Winton we find a cluster of attitudes working from the inside of his mind. Since he
belongs to the European race he nourishes a sense of superiority and in spite of his protest against Jean's acquisition that he did not marry Ruby, because of the sense of racial superiority, he cannot be said to be free from racial pride. Ruby also accepts the job of a teacher on Henry's plantations with the intention of winning and marrying the white man who is a passport to the dream world of Eurasian womanhood. Like most of her fellow Anglo-Indians, Ruby is unhappy with her Indian connection and she wants to make herself complete by marrying a white man. In her, Manohar Malgonkar finds a voice of dream of Anglo-Indian:

She could never have explained to Henry Winton the throbbing compulsive craving of Anglo-India to seek living kinship with the West; the desperate, daily struggle of separation and alignment, the tight clutching of the tenuous, often imaginary strands of relationship with the sahibs, the constant vigilance against further assimilation with the smothering, enveloping people of the Indian soil.

Ruby finds, contrary to her expectations, only a lust for the flesh in the relationship with Henry Winton. In the next part of the novel when Henry is humbled by slow discovery of his wife's disloyalty, he is able to love Ruby. Humbled and chastened by his tragic experience of a lustreless and loveless married life, he turns of Ruby without fear, pride and racial prejudice. But it was too late and Ruby has plunged
herself into irreversible frustration and lack of faith. She becomes a symbol of general Anglo-Indian belief that there is nothing but sorrow and disappointment in their seeking kinship with the White Race. She is blind by racial hatred and refuses to notice the change that has dawned upon Henry Winton.

In Kanala Markandaya's the situation is altogether different. The relationship between Richard and Mira is based upon mutual attraction, understanding and it is also a communion of deeper level of souls. Racial and cultural differences do not interfere in their positive relationship. In their physical union there is always poetry, love and rare tenderness. On the other hand, Ruby and Henry work at cross purposes and they enter into sexual relationship with ulterior motives. Passions of fear, suspicion, pride, desire and aversion aroused by racial and cultural prejudice scuttle their enduring relationship. In fact, Markandaya and Kalgonkar have approached the subject of interracial and intercultural relationships in two different ways. They stand on two extreme points of possibilities with regard to this subject. But they come to the same conclusion that there is much disappointment and suffering for the people who try to break racial and cultural barriers and come together. However, it is relevant to observe that both the novels were written just before independence. Naturally, the time was not ripe for the conceptualisations of such relationships.
Raja Rao's *The Serpent and the Rope* covers both preindependence and post independence years. Consequently, it reflects the spirit of confidence and pride which pervaded the Indian subcontinent. While in Markandaya's *Some Inner Fury* and Malgonkar's *Combat of Shadows*, the encounter between two ethnic races takes place in India, Raja Rao's novel has, for the most part France as its background. The heroine, unlike those of Markandaya and Malgonkar, is from Western hemisphere and the hero is a coloured man. Ramaswamy is a Brahmin from South India who goes to France to work on a research project. He comes across Madeleine at the University of Caen. The two fall in love and marry. Their first son Krishna dies of broncho-pneumonia within a year of his birth and the second also dies immediately after his birth. In the meantime, Ramaswamy makes two visits to India and finds that his love for native people and culture begins to impinge on his consciousness. Love of a spiritual nature develops between him and Savitri, a girl from an Indian royal family. Madeleine's interest in Buddhism grows acute and more acute and even though their mutual love does not diminish, they are practically separated. They finally dissolve their marriage through legal divorce. In a sense the separation between them is a mystery because both of them have qualities and understanding for each other. In their relationship we find a tender appreciation of physical beauty, virtues of character, quality of mind, similarity of likings and also a mutual respect for each other's culture. However, we can forge out a message
from the complex and mysterious relationship of characters belonging to two races: that love between members of two ethnic groups is possible even if their marriage is not a lasting one.

Anita Desai's *Bye-Bye Blackbird* is also a popular novel on the theme of tension in the relationship between British and Indian characters. Aditsen, a young man of India lives with his English wife Sarah. Unable to find a decent job in his own country in spite of a degree from a British University, Adit has returned to England and settled down there. Right from the beginning Adit had love for England and had deemed England to be a land of infinite opportunities. Despite all his love and regard for England, England does not accept him. After his marriage with Sarah, Sarah has been trying to persuade him to return to India. Sarah is in anguish of loneliness and she feels herself at the cross roads of the loss of identity. She is a question mark to herself:

Who was she - Mrs. Sen who had been married in a red and gold Benares brocade sari one burning, bronzed day in September, or Mrs. Sen, the Head's secretary, who sent out the bill and took in the cheques, kept order in the school and was known for her efficiency? Both these creatures were frauds, each had a large, shadowed element of charade about it ... Her face was only a mask, her body only a costume. Where was Sarah? Staring out of window at the chimney pots and the clouds,
she wondered if Sarah had any existence at all, and then she wondered, with great sadness, is she would ever be allowed to step off the stage, leave the theatre and enter the real world — whether English or Indian, she did not care, she wanted only its sincerity, its truth. 26

Though his friend Dev who has been critical of immigrants decides to settle in England, Adit and Sarah come to perceive the basic disharmony in their situation. London ceases to be the golden Mecca and they are haunted by the black sensation of not belonging. They decide to make a home coming to their native soil after they have come to locate the real meaning of their relationship:

Silent, frozen on the divan, Sarah and Adit held hands like a pair of children, feeling Bengal, feeling India sweep into their room like a flooded river, drowning all that had been English in it, all that had been theirs, friendly and private and comfortable, drowning it all and replacing it with the emptiness and sorrow, the despair and rage, the flat grey melancholy and the black glamour of India. They themselves were tossed about by the flood like flotsam and then became a part of it, the black flood. 27

A brief analysis of these three novels brings home to us the difference between them and Markandaya's Some Inner Fury.
In all these three novels the concluding message is that ethnic difference cannot be sublimated into real love. In Malgonkar's *Combat of Shadows* the novel ends on a note of dissatisfaction and an interplay of selfish motives, in Raja Rao on an assertion of *Swadharma*, the truth that ethnic identities are too insular to be merged into each other. In Anita Desai's *Bye-Bye Blackbird* the novel concludes with an awareness of the Indian-ness of characters in a room in England. They feel Bengal or India sweeps into their room in that epiphanic flash of their identity but another character stays on in England. Thus it is not a case of union but of a replacement of fascination.

In *Some Inner Fury* there is emotional intensity, tenderness, meeting of the selves, union of the souls and also an awareness of the historical reality and social evil. The heroine reflects: "Your people and my people?...They are nothing to you cried my heart, nothing, nothing." This is personal reality and in personal relationship Markandaya has forged the possibility of perfect understanding. It is the most hopeful articulation of cultural coexistence.

Still another variation on ethnic understanding reflecting cultural coexistence is explored in Markandaya's recent novel *Pleasure City*. In *Pleasure City* also Tully and Rikki are archetypes of two different races and cultures and in their relationship we find the twilight of togetherness. They also depart but in their understanding and relationship, the rancour, fury, hatred and anger of racial incompatibilityis
almost obliterated. Their relationship illustrates that two cultures can co-exist without smothering each other's identity and can enrich each other by a harmonious approach. Rikki is a fisher boy who grows under the native environment of the sea coast living as well as the enlightening impact of Mrs. Rose Bridie who initiates him into the world of aesthetics through books. The novel makes it quite clear in the beginning.

At no time did Rikki rebel. He took to books as he had taken to the sea. Both gave him pleasure, but the sea had come first. He kept from his infancy a clear, abiding memory of being lowered from his father's arm into a warm, familiar, infinitely blue and embracing element. 'The baby swam. No sooner the water touched than he swam.' The child's father swore to cronies, in accents of pride and joy. These feelings echoed his son's; and to this enduring memory was added another of similar intensity when Mrs. Rose Bridie placed the open, illuminated volume in his hands. 28

Rikki liked Mrs. Bridie's lessons:

The language seemed to unfold before him, daily yielding something fresh and delightful. He loved Mrs. Bridie's rich leather bound holy books with gilt and vermilion edges to the leaves, which she sometimes allowed him to handle. He loved the stories she read to him out of them, they were so rich, so full of Bridie's heart. Sometimes she took him on her
lap to read to him, he could hear it fluttering away inside her. 29

Rikki's father dies and the mother also soon departs. Kuthu's family takes him in. He is adopted by the family. The whole community had come forward. The community of fishermen have their own way of life. Markandaya portrays its reality:

If not they, someone would have sheltered the orphan. It was a standing arrangement, or a way of life, that went back as far as anyone could remember and beyond that, they guessed. So long as one soul or one roof was left, all of them knew no oneneed fear having to scavenge around like a stray dog. It was the one certainty or assurance, or an uncertain life. 30

He begins to attend to the call of the sea but the riches of the imagination equally shape him. If Mrs. Bridie has awakened in him beauty of language and literature, Mr. Bridie helps him also to shape up the ravishing pebbles into enticing design:

'What use, Benjamin', said Mrs. Bridie, standing on the verandah, tapping her pointed toe on the scroll-edge of the design that was emerging, 'What use, do you suppose, this craft will be to a fisherboy?' 'As much use, Rose' said Mr. Bridie, 'as your stories. That is to say, as much or as little as he cares to make of them.' 31
Rikki's life as well as the life of the community undergoes a change with the arrival of AIDCORP, the Atlas International Development Corporation building luxury pleasure complex. It is the latest form of technology. The impact of technology on the rural world of India was articulated in the first novel Nectar in a Sieve through the symbol of tannery. In The Coffer Dams tannery takes shape of a dam and in Pleasure City it comes up in the form of a luxury complex. The spirit of technology represented in The Coffer Dams by the British and European technocrats is embodied in Pleasure City by AIDCORP:

AIDCORP built anywhere, everywhere, almost anything for anyone, with a vbuissosity as dazzling as its politics were bland. To put it plainly, it never allowed private feelings to interfere with business. To put it even plainer, it consisted, with an admirably distilled purity, of purely technological mercenaries. 32

The luxury complex Shalimar is a world in itself. When the villas get ready together with essential ancillaries like restaurant, bar and places of amusement the tourists begin to pour in. It affects different people in different ways. Apu, the headman says clearly: 'This is your territory. The water are ours, to a five-fathom depth.' 33 Cyrus Contractor replies:

There is no intention whatsoever to purloin their waters. But tell them; he said in his soft voice to convince other as he was himself
convinced, we must all learn to share what is God's gift to us all. 34

The kind of indifference that is observable in The Coffin Dams where the Western technocrats encroach upon the tribal's land and uproot them is not to be found here. There is greater amount of understanding and acceptance. There are a host of characters. Mrs. Lovat is fascinated by India and wants to find it out. But her novels are liked everywhere except in India. There is Mr. Boyle the founder of AIDCOP who has an affection deep and genuine for India where he had initially made his fortune, but he remembers nostalgically that the sun never sets in the British Empire. There is Mrs. Fearl always conscious of her respectability; Carmen, the Spanish dancer, Valli, the local belle and Corinna, Tully's ravishing wife. The novel portrays all of them, their ways and styles, their whims and prejudices. There is the nexus of understanding between characters belonging to two ethnic groups. Valli, the local belle and Carmen, the Spanish dancer with their professional akinness but more than that, they interest in terms of their culture. At the time of departue of Carmen, Alvanez, Valli takes off her garland and places it over her friend's. Carmen offers her the packet of dark chocolate cigarillos. The exchange of gift is in fact, an exchange of hearts, a meeting of two ethnic identities. Cultural dualism finds an expression through the interaction between them. The talk between them reflects their ways of life, their culture.
'But it is really too hot a dance in the plains', said Carmen, fixing the tortoise shell high, over her proud, shaved mane 'at this time of year. I don't know how you do it.'

'I have to'. Valli helped with the combs. The festivals, you see, come at any time.'

'Any time?' said Carmen, slowly opening her black lace fan. Being a catholic, she would never know.'

'All the year round. Hot weather, any weather,' said Valli.35

But the focus of the novel is on the relationship between Tully and Rikki. Their friendship has deeper connotations; they are ethnic archetypes. Their first meeting is a significant; it is a meeting of innocence and understanding. Rikki saw Tully swimming out through the barrier. The evening was calm, there was no danger but coming on it unaware might be jarring. Tully meanwhile was still heading out to sea. Launching off the log Rikki swam to intercept, calling a warning as he went, Rikki's voice carried clearly:

Tully stopped swimming and trod water. Used to the Atlantic since knee high, he knew enough to pause when advised; and also enough to know himself outclassed. Good swimmer he was but the boy was an altogether different stripe. Swimming in long, clean strokes, with a grace that suppressed all notion of effort, he had made the sea his element.36
Rikki warns Tully:

"You must be careful. There are rocks here, you know." Tully did. AIDCORP. carried out exhaustive surveys before launching its projects, as any concern would, as almost anyone would know. Not to, argued a quality of unflawed innocence that touched Tully. He smothered the crips yes-I-know that hovered, and said instead, 'I'm glad you told me. We must do something about it.'

In fact, in Tully, Rikki finds, someone who could respond on the same channel.

Indeed, inwardly Rikki was smouldering seals of wax beginning to melt. After a lifetime (it was barely a year), here was another like Mrs. Bridie. One who could speak if he chose, like Mrs. Bridie, who would lose aside the tools, and stop cursing the abstinate, rusty hinges, and begin telling about cupolas and dornea.

Rikki's imagination finds strength in Tully's company. His relationship with almost all characters is positive and cordial but in Tully he finds emotional reciprocation. It is the human quality in Tully that strikes the responding chord in Rikki's heart. When he presents him a rare flower which has only one bloom in each season, and comes back to his sister, he tells Valli he is as human, as you are. This
feeling that he is a human being brings him close. Tully has inherited Avalon, a building which is now in ruins. It was built in the days when India seemed embedded in empire forever like a jeweled set in celtic gold. Now it has fallen apart and needs renovation. The hill on which Avalon was perched provided ample views. Rikki has been frequenting it and watching the landscape. He is fully acquainted with the whole surroundings and he appreciates the glow and beauty of the marbles that have given Avalon its structure and design. Tully appreciates and encourages his interest in mosaic designs. Both of them participate in the beauty and enchantment of the whole landscape from the PROSPECT POINT.

They sat perilously, one at each end to prevent the rickety structure see-sawing, peering at a dense thicket of well-grown cacti.

But under the intensity of their gaze the solid object lost its certainty, its uncompromising outlines wavered and grew fluid, the thicket, insert with splintery sea-blues, dissolved before their eyes to reveal a wide, cut-sapphire expanse of ocean. It could have been a trick of light, or even a reversion to original intention, in which both were involved.

'One can easily see', said Tully, presently, 'the whole ocean at one's feet, from here. In spite of cactus.'
'Yes.' Now Rikki was with him. 'Sometimes we see what's there, sometimes what isn't.'

'Perhaps they're two sides of the same face', suggested Tully.

The same face would look serenely on creation preservation, and destruction.

'I think they are the same kind of power,' said Rikki.

A power that could play over lesser areas too, raising palaces, or reducing bushes, come to that. 39

Tully reflects a racial consciousness and a pride in the fact that his country has ruled over India. He expresses his view that he likes order and cannot remain in ruins and tells Rikki:

I like order ... that was one reason, perhaps the only respectable one, why we took over your country, to impose our order on what seemed to us your confusion. 40

There are other places when Rikki becomes aware of the difference in their attitude and way of life:

At time like these Rikki felt the division between them, between one man and another, their minds, their reach and sway, the reality of the distance between himself and Tully.
Distance? Notes of incredulity sounded as well. Distance between them, chipping at marble in the pool-room together, sharing the light, and emotions? Where was the reality, what was vapour? Presently he had to lay down the chisel and simply sit, wondering, looking full face at Tully.

'What is it Rikki'? Absorbed though he was, Tully could not ignore the glance. It would be opaque, he could tell even without looking up. Absinthe gone cloudy, after additives.

'Distance,' said Rikki 'There is an ocean between us', he said, flatly. 41

There are such moments when Rikki becomes aware of the basic difference between them, their attitude to life, their culture and heritage, but in totality Tully's character is human. The reconstruction of Avalon is contrasted against building of Shalimar, the Pleasure City. The character in Shalimar fails to realise that colour makes no difference to basic humanity. On the other hand, for Tully the interculture colonial experience of India is ingrained in his consciousness. It has been in his family for generations and therefore, he can open out to, receive and understand the Eastern mind. Rikki's statement made before his sister Valli sums up the whole difference: "He is human, as you or me." He is the son of Sophic Copeland who has figured in the earlier novel The
Golden Honeycomb. Avalon which he inherits grows on love, care and understanding in clear contrast with Shalimar which grows on money, expertise and subjugation. Tully's commitments in the shape of his profession draws him away from Shalimar and Rikki once the project is over.

Tully-Rikki friendship is an extension of Richard-Mira, Srinivas Mrs. Pickering and Helen-Bashiam relationships. They are Karkandaya's metaphors of interracial interaction at different points of history in India's life. Despite Rikki's assertion that "there is an ocean between us," yet the understanding between the East and West has deepened. When Tully goes away, Rikki wanders in and out of the rooms of Avalon and finally rushes to the Prospect Point:

Rikki's step quickened. He would hurry, and get to Prospect Point in good time, and settle down to watch. The views from there were matchless— not to be had from anywhere else, as he and Tully had often agreed.42

Tully is gone, but his spirit hovers, his love and tenderness, his human elements continue. The sharing and participation in the landscape, the infinite together enlarge the characters into symbols of humanity. They are creatures of twilight, the meeting point of two cultures, two races into the fabric of humanity. They are living, breathing metaphors of the perception of human essentials transcending the surface barriers of race.
Yet another subtle but significant articulation of cultural coexistence is forged through a co-presence of two ways of life, the materialistic and spiritual, the mystical and empirical in our social context. *The Last Labyrinth* delineates the contemporary reality of our modern society caught in this ambivalence most artistically through the story of Som Bhaskar who is a product of dual cultural conditions. The novel has not reached the still point; his *Four Quartets* is still far ahead. His wheels are turning; *The Last Labyrinth* is Arun Joshi's *Ash Wednesday*.

The novel depicts a cosmopolitan world where the hero is restless because his experiences and urges cannot be reconciled. Som Bhaskar, a Brahmin and a multi-millionaire, was born of loving parents. His father was a scientist—a chemist-turned successful industrialist. He resided in Bombay and loved his wife who was a religious woman having deep faith in *Krishna*. She fell a victim to cancer. Mr. Bhaskar was upset. All possible medical care was taken. Dr. Kashyap, known in the novel as 'K', looked after her. But she would not take her medicines. She had abiding faith in *Krishna*, who, she believed, would cure her. Her faith disturbed 'K'. One day Mr. Bhaskar suggested to 'K' that her lungs should be removed, and new lungs be transplanted. He offered his own lungs. 'K' was irritated and remarked that if only her gods and goddesses were thrown away, she would recover. At that time, Som was only fourteen. Som
was sent to his school. One day he was informed by the Headmaster that his mother had died and his father did not want that Som should attend the funeral. The wife of the Headmaster, a young woman, took Som inside and offered him milk and biscuit. She touched him with affection. Her soft fingers and palm dyed with mehandi caused a peculiar erotic sensation and that night he thought of her. When he reached home, the father and the son stood by the side of the vacant cot of Som's mother. Som felt a hallowness, but his father cried and patted Som. Though his wife's death shook Mr. Bhaskar much, he did not fail in his duty. He looked after Som well and gave him the best education possible at that time. Som was educated in Europe and America and travelled abroad. Som got modern education and rich experiences of a modern, urban, material and commercial culture. He studied the Buddha, Pascal, Spinoza and Indian religions, delved deep into Darwin and other philosophers of evolutionary theory. When he came back, his father made him incharge of a plant. They visited the Elephanta caves. There Som's father was meditative. He spoke to 'K' that the universe was mysterious. Science proved inadequate. It did not explain the reasons behind the creation and happenings in the universe. He thought there was the First Cause. He wanted Som to understand it. Once he sent Som on a business tour to Ceylon. He went to Anuradhapura also. The Ceylonese were intoxicated with the Buddha, his teachings and 'Nirvana'. Som failed to get the contract. He drank heavily and his father did not
approve of his conduct. Mr. Bhaskar had developed melancholia. A week after Som's return from Ceylon, Mr. Bhaskar died. Som was only twentyfive and a millionaire. Som came back to his father's room after the funeral and he was reminded of the first cause and his father's expectation that Som would understand it.

Som became reserved and brooding. He felt restless. He had a feeling that he wanted something. He heard an agonising song in the air 'want, I want, I want.' But he did not know what he wanted. The restlessness made him a fornicator. He longed for women and ran after them. But his restlessness did not subside. One day 'K' informed Som that his father suffered from restlessness. After the death of his wife, Mr. Bhaskar became moody and kept brooding. He was in quest of the first cause and had visited the Lal Haveli, and the temple of Krishna as a flame. He developed melancholia and died of it. Som decided to ward off that disease. He had money. He had whores. But he should get married, have children and gain name and fame. This decision led to two things. One was his marriage, and other was the will to corner companies. He married Geeta a good, beautiful and modest girl. She had impressed him as a modest, innocent, purehearted, trusting girl. They loved each other much. She had a fine body and youthfulness and loved Som. Within ten years, they had two children. He found that Geeta did not change much in course
of time. Like his mother, Geeta had become religious and took interest in saints, temples, Krishna and astrologers. It did not mean that she had lost desires. She cooperated whenever Som wanted her.

But the marriage and Geeta’s love did not pacify Som. He remained a womanizer. He consulted many psychiatrists about his restlessness and fornication they could not help him. In course of time, Som came into contact with Leela Sabnis. She was highly educated and intelligent. She was the daughter of a scholar, and she herself was well-read. Books were her first love. She was a married woman. Her husband divorced her because Leela was absorbed in her studies. She was influenced by Descartes. She had a faith that reason and analysis could solve any riddle. Som met her when Geeta was away and felt her need. Even Leela responded and they had an affair. They carried on for a pretty long time. But Som was not satisfied. His restlessness did not calm down. Even Leela’s analysis of Som’s psychology was unsatisfactory. Som felt that only dry intellectualism would make things dreary. Since they lived on different wave lengths, their enthusiasm for each other cooled down.

Som was engaged in acquiring name and fame. He was interested in cornering companies and purchasing shares. He became aware of the company of Aftab Rai, a resident of Benaras. It was not functioning properly and Som felt that he should buy
the shares of Aftab's company. Mr. Rai had given reception to
the Plastic Manufacturers Association. Som went to attend it.
He stayed in the Intercontinental Hotel of Delhi. He met Mr.
Rai and his supposed wife Anuradha Rai. Mr. Thapar had informed
Som that Aftab was a mysterious, moody and secretive man. On
the other hand, his wife was balanced, clear headed, clever
and frank. Som might work through her. Som saw Anuradha. She
looked obsolete and undefinable. She was like a Moghul monument.
Her eyes shone with unquenched desires. Her palms were coloured
with mehandi and Som felt erotic sensation. When drink started,
Aftab did not share. Anuradha kept company. Aftab proposed that
they should walk down to the dargah of a saint. Som did not
like it. But he went with them. Aftab asked him to stay there
and Anuradha was to keep him company. When the two were alone,
Anuradha asked if Som was there to buy Aftab's shares. She
asked him to leave Aftab alone and not to upset him. But Som
tried to convince her that the business deal would benefit
Aftab. Business was a war for survival. Only the alert and
competent would survive. Aftab lacked those qualities and his
business was bound to fail. So, he should hand it over to Som.
Anuradha was not convinced. She said that as a matter of fact,
Som wanted something else. Hence, he should not disturb them.
Besides, Aftab and Som were no match for each other. In that
meeting, Som could not make any headway. He could only feel
interested in Anuradha. Aftab invited Som to see him at Benaras.
Som reached Benaras after some time. He was received in
the Lal Haveli and was taken around. Som felt that Lal Haveli
was a 'sepulchral, sensual den of Aftab.' 43 The Haveli had
a Blue Room. He felt a strange sensation as if there was 'a
darkbrooding presence.' 44 Som discussed the business with
Aftab and tried to prevail upon him for disposing of the share.
He pleaded that Aftab would have ready money in the Bank. Aftab
did not feel tempted. Besides, Anuradha did not want that heshould wind up his business. Even then he could consider
selling the shares if he got the right man. Som wanted to
engage Aftab in discussion, but Aftab had no aptitude for it.

Som felt that he and Aftab were different. Som was a
child of Bombay and Aftab was a child of Benaras. Aftab's
ancestors were residents of Lucknow. They were decadents
wiling away their time in idleness, music and dancing girls.
Even Aftab, when he was only 15, was presented a female slave.
He felt at home in Benaras.

As Aftab went away to wash, Som was left with Anuradha
alone in the Blue room. Som saw reflection of Anuradha and
himself in the mirror "One ageing and tense, the other dark-
eyed, sexy, a little fatigued." 45 Anuradha told him that she
had met Geeta in Bombay. She also informed Som that she was
not married to Aftab. Then Aftab came and proposed that they
should walk towards the ghats. The sight of the Manikarnika
filled him with a void. They crossed the Ganges and reached
a cottage. It was of a saintly woman, Gargi. She was fair, rosy and charming. Her smile was pleasing. Her presence weakened Som's will to buy the shares of Aftab. Som asked Anuradha to spend some time with him. He talked to her on many things. How his mother and Geeta had faith in Krishna? How did she die? Whether Anuradha had belief in miracles? All these were talked. He wanted to know about Gargi. Anuradha informed him that Gargi was the daughter of a Sufi Fir. Her father drank much. He used to say that when he was drunk, Allah visited him, but never talked. He believed that he would talk some day. He waited, but Allah did not talk. It frustrated him and he fell ill. He said that God must give evidence of his existence. The Fir's father prayed to God. A dervesh visited him in sleep and asked him to sacrifice his dearest thing to Allah. He prayed to Allah to take away his own life and cure his son. His prayer was heard. Gargi's father recovered and her grandfather died. It was an evidence that her father sought. He disappeared for sometime. When he came back, he was a Fir, he had given eyesight to Aftab who was stoneblind. Som had no faith in the story. Then Anuradha left him alone in the room.

While Som was alone in the room, he recollected his past. He remembered his marriage with Geeta and his affairs with Leela. He got tired and fell asleep. He dreamt that he had possessed Anuradha. Next day, he returned to Benaras. He asked Mr. Thapar not to buy the shares of Aftab's company. One day
'K' invited Som to lunch with him. He talked of Lal Haveli, Aftab and Anuradha. He knew Anuradha. She was born in Bihar-sharif. She was the daughter of a dancing woman. One day a stranger came with a bag full of money. He did not leave her. They shifted to Gwalior. Anuradha's mother loved Krishna and thought she was married to Him. One day she and the man had a ferocious quarrel. Probably he wanted to wed her. She was not ready. He killed her and hanged himself. Anuradha was brought to Bombay by her aunt. She was educated there. She was made an actress. Then Aftab brought her to Benares. When Anuradha was in Bombay, she had an attack of small pox. She was with her aunt. One day 'K' got a phone from Aftab. He asked 'K' to visit Anuradha as she was critical. 'K' went there. Her aunt was surprised. When Anuradha's room was opened, she was in a bathtub with her wrist cut. It was a wonder how Aftab knew when the aunt had no knowledge. Som decided that he would have nothing to do with Aftab and Anuradha. But chance took him there. In a meeting, Som met Aftab who asked him to accompany. Som followed him. They went to Gargi. She offered him Khir. Som ate but left a part of it to be consumed by Anuradha. While returning to the Haveli, Som met an astrologer who made a forecast that Som would ever possess his beloved for ever. It made Som determined to possess Anuradha. That night he made love to her. She also responded when Som convinced her that he longed for her. Now he was not interested in the shares of
Aftab. He wanted to possess her completely. She responded but she was not convinced. She felt Som wanted something else. Though he came over and again to meet Anuradha, and made love to her, he was never relaxed. His passions were never quenched. He lusted for her. There was nothing new in her, yet her pull was irresistible. Som went on a tour of America, Europe and Japan. He was with his wife. He tried to absorb himself in tour and Geeta, but he remained lusting for Anuradha. They came back. Som fell ill. People thought he had a heart-attack. He was confined to bed for a pretty long time. Geeta and 'K' attended on him. 'K' believed that Som was developing melancholia.

One day, Som came suddenly to Gargi. He talked frankly of his problems. He sought her help. She wrote: "God will send someone to help you." Som wanted to know who he would be. She again wrote: "Someone who has known suffering." He and Gargi went to see Aftab as he was ill. Gargi touched him and Aftab fell asleep. Som was feeling sleepy and tired and wanted to return to his hotel. He did not want to go with Anuradha. Gargi looked at him and wrote "Go with her. Don't quarrel. She is your shakti." That night he experienced how indispensable Anuradha had become for him. She might be essential, but he felt that she was distant. He had no liking for Lal Haveli, Aftab and Benaras. The labyrinths of the city and the Haveli unnerved him. Anuradha agreed that he should not have
come over to Lal Haveli. He proposed that Anuradha should shift to Bombay. He would meet her expenses. But she declined the offer. "I like to live here, with Aftab, Gargi." Som was not ready to get this answer. He carried her to the hills. He wanted to uproot her and then possess her. But she said "she was Aftab's." One night when she was drunk, she pointed to the hills and revealed that there lived a god. She wanted that Som should take her to the shrine. But Som's agnosticism shocked her. She insisted on returning to Benaras.

On one Janmastami day, Som was in Benaras. They were ready to go to the temple. Anuradha was gorgeously dressed. Som did not enter the temple. He sat outside. She came rushing to invite him to see the Lord taking birth. He declined to go. Anuradha returned. She was drunk with joy, she was aglow. She offered alms and laughed. That night he again asked her to leave Benaras, but her reply was the same. Once she went to Bombay. They spent time in a bed in a hotel. As she felt their relationship was predestined, she agreed to leave Benaras. He left Anuradha to her Aunt's place and returned to his house. He had a massive heart attack. 'K' Geeta and Anuradha had lost all hope. He was almost dead. When he recovered, he wanted to contack Anuradha. But she refused to come. She did not even talk to him. It puzzled him. He became ferocious. He decided to wreck vengeance on them. He ordered Thapar to buy all shares at all cost. He confessed to his wife that he was carrying on with Anuradha. Geeta was calm and assured and replied that
she knew it. He engaged even detectives to trace a bunch of shares. It was in the name of Mrs. Anuradha Rai but no one knew where it was transferred. Som would not leave it. Even at the cost of economic liquidation, he should buy all shares. Som was bent upon destroying Aftab for forcing Anuradha to cut herself off from Som. They met again in Delhi in the same hotel. Som was bitter. He tried to insult Aftab. But he was beyond humiliation. He told Som that he knew his mind, whereas Som did not know what he had wanted. Aftab spoke with assurance "a peaceful death that is all I want." On the other hand, Som did not know his mind. He wanted to have the cake and eat it too. He wanted to have faith and doubts both. Som swallowed his pride and asked Aftab if he could come to Lal Haveli. Aftab answered in a firm negative. Before leaving Som, Aftab handed over to him a packet as a gift from Anuradha. Though Som was angry because she had ditched him, he pined for her. He lusted for her and accepted the gift. It was an image of Krishna.

The detective informed Som that Anuradha had transferred those shares to Krishna's shrine in the mountains. Som was ready to go to snatch them. 'K' had to accompany him. They stayed in the Guest House. Som had stayed there last summer with Anuradha. So, people recognised Som and questioned him about Anuradha. They saw an old man being carried in a Palki to die by the side of lake in the mountains. They actually saw him die and cremated with all rituals. They reached a small town near the shrine.
Vasudeva, a panda, met them. They stayed with the Panda. Som came to know that his father had also visited the temple. 'K' tried to dissuade Som from seizing those shares. Next day, they proceeded further. They were met by an English knowing man. He guided them to Gargi's presence. They saw that all knew Gargi and worshipped her. She took care of these pilgrims as if she knew of their plan. 'K' was in earnestness to talk to her. The night before they had set out for the shrine, Anuradha had phoned him from Benaras. She had said that Gargi had saved the life of Som. Anuradha wept before Gargi to have pity and save Som. Gargi performed the miracle on a condition that Anuradha would give up Som for ever. As another sacrifice to the god, Anuradha handed over a packet to Gargi containing all her jewels and shares. 'K' sought confirmation from Gargi. She confirmed that a packet was sent to her. She did not speak about the miracle. She only smiled. 'K' was convinced. But Som had doubts. He wanted that Gargi should speak out. They wanted to visit the shrine. Gargi made arrangement. They found that a man-size flame burnt in a mountainous temple. Som did not feel impressed. If it was god and if Gargi would not confirm the miracle, he would not only seize the packet from Gargi but also Anuradha from Aftab. 'K' again pleaded with Som to refrain himself, but Som would not listen. Next day Som went to Gargi and asked for the packet. She at once gave it to him. He insisted that Gargi should confirm or deny the miracle. But she did not reply. She simply said that he would
not be harmed if he believed in God. But Som was not ready. He told Gargi that if she did not reveal the truth, he would challenge God and seize the shares and Anuradha. He was scared yet he would like to challenge. Som came back with the shares and reached Lal Haveli to grab Anuradha Aftab wept before him but promised to send Anuradha before him. It was a Janmastami day. Anuradha was dressed for the ceremony. She came rushing to Som and asked him to leave the Haveli. There was danger on his life. She almost pushed him out. Next morning Som went to the Haveli. He found Aftab dishevelled. Anuradha had gone to the temple. From there she had disappeared. Som informed the police. Nothing could be done. Som received a letter from Aftab that Anuradha had saved his life that night in the Haveli, but Aftab would not spare him. He would not live without Anuradha and he would punish Som for the sin. Som did not understand. He still craved for her. He thought that she was with the divine. If she had reached Him, she should prevail upon God to have mercy on Som, for he was shattered. He had become weary of his fears, doubts and longings.

The story of the novel details out in clear terms the predicament of Som who is a product of twin cultures. In him, we find a true voice of one of the facets of Indian cultural reality. Like Sindi, Som Bhaskar has the genes of two cultures in him. Being born and brought up in India, Som studied abroad. He studied at some of the finest universities of the world
and spent many of his impressionable years outside India. It is but natural that he imbibes something of western outlook; the reliance on reason, scientific temper, materialistic outlook and intellectual aptitude which are the gifts of the West to Som. They are further strengthened by his father. In fact infictions of contradictions are in the blood. "His grand father was a happy, carefree man. He was a man-about-town, a womanizer and a boozier. He was man of impulse and satisfaction of senses was all that he desired. He was 'reckless, happy, unburdened by philosophical speculation." Any reference to God embarrassed him. He disappeared when there was a Kirtan at the house. He was a loving friend and a ferocious enemy. On the other hand, Som's father was a scientist, brilliant and diligent. He was loving, alert and speculative and had an insatiable thirst of knowledge, a desire to know the mystery of the universe. He wanted to explore the relationship between cause and effect to the end. He was observed with the First Cause. As a scientist, he must unravel the riddle of the mysterious universe and creation.

Who knows the truth? Who can tell whence and how arose the universe? The gods are later than its beginning: who knows, therefore, whence comes this creation? Only that God who sees in the highest heaven; He only knows whence came this universe. He only knows. Or, perhaps, he knows not.
These two opposite influences inflict Som. He is aware of it. "I had inherited the afflictions of both of them," "Why else if not for the afflictions bestowed upon me by my genes, I was in deep trouble?" Som develops into a womanizer, a boozer, a high strong impulsive man. But he is also thirsty of knowledge. His father had desired that Som, a student of philosophy, should try to know the First Cause, and he incarnates this passion of his father. Besides, his mother was a religious woman. She had profound faith and endurance. She had the will and courage to suffer for faith. She had developed cancer, but she would not take the pills. Only Krishna would cure her, and she died of cancer and Krishna. Naturally the blood of his mother flowing in his veins cries for the faith, the abiding love for Krishna. Dr. K. says that this blood is chemical and Som is also aware that Tuka Ram shows this body as a chariot of God. The two-science and Religion-create a strain within him.

Besides, these Som's is a psychological case. When he was only fifteen, he lost his mother. He feels insecure. At the age of eighteen, Som visits Ajanta and experiences a terrible void. Insecurity and inadequacy trouble him. He feels hollow. But his hollowness, his restlessness is not like that of Billy or Sindi. Billy feels estranged because he does not feel his life authenticated in the commercial and money-conscious civilisation. Som has no problem with the society. He
is quite at home in the commercial world of Bombay. He calls himself a child of Bombay if Aftab is a child of Benaras. He experiences no communication gap with Mr. Thapar and others. So, he is quite at peace with his surroundings. His inflections are internal. The contradictory impulses of reason and intuition, doubt and faith, resistance and submission create a tension in him. He inherits from his grandfather a love for womanizing, drinking and sensuality and hatred. "Above all, I have a score to settle. I forget nothing, forgive no one." Here Som echoes his grandfather he derives a Pascalian inclination to know, and if possible to believe, and the mother impulse goads him to trust, to surrender. Thus, emotionally Som has become a labyrinth. He is torn by the inner contradictions and his consciousness wanders in the maze of the opposite impulses. He develops an intense feeling of inadequacy, a feeling of rootlessness, a feeling of rudderless boat being tossed on turbulent waves. He confesses "If only one knew that one wanted. Or, may be, to know was what I wanted. To know, just that. No more. No less. This, then, was a labyrinth too, this going forward and backward and sideways of the mind." In order to experience an anchorage and security, he rushes to the arms of innumerable women, but everytime the voids come upon him with greater force. After every relationship, Som feels more discontented. Leela Sabnis attracts him more powerfully than others. She is a well-read, reasoning woman of forceful personality. She can make love, she can respond while being loved
and yet she can reason. She has Descartian belief that every riddle - even the riddles of intuition and faith - can be solved by analysis. She is quite clear that the worlds of reason and mysteries are quite apart and they need not be confused. So, Som feels dissatisfied. His hunger is a body and spirit both. Hunger of body is a cry for emotional authentication, and hunger of spirit is an earning for self realization. Only Descartes, who propounds 'I think, therefore, I am', cannot solve his problem. He pits Spinoza against Descartes and finds Leela inadequate.

Som is tormented by his knowledge. Awareness of Descartes, Spinoza, Freud, Jung, Buddha and Krishna tortures him. Darwin torments. He has gone through the history of evolution and remembers his Darwin by heart. If Descartes is correct, if Freud and Jung and Darwin are correct, what should he think of his mother's faith, Geeta's trust? He broods "if discontent is my trade mark, trust is Geeta's .... Geeta trusts like birds fly, like fish swim." Geeta has been married to him for the last ten years and has borne his two daughters. She is still lovable, beautiful and tempting. But she has become more religious. If Som is goaded to increasing fornication, Geeta engages herself in cleansing her soul. For Som, whose apparent consciousness is moulded on Descartes, Freud and Darwin, Geeta's life is a puzzle. He knows he wants Geeta, he loves her and cannot live without her, yet he cannot under-
stand her. He feels he has possessed only the body of Geeta, not the whole of Geeta. He is emotionally bewildered and estranged. She appears to him a bit distant. It is so, because Som is a man of two selves. His one self is a lover of the material, analytical scientific and sensual world - the womanizer, the boozzer and the scientific analyzer. There is another self inside. It recollects the endurance of his mother, trust of Geeta and their joy in suffering. It is this self that reminds him of self-imposed suffering for the faith in the invisible, the unknown and the mysterious. The two selves do not co-exist; they are warring, and Som is in agony. Talking of evolution, Som tells Gargi, "Why should there be this turn to evolution? Why should man be equipped, burdened, with this strange ... this strange sensibility or urge or drive? Is it by chance? Or, is there a meaning to it?"56 Som explains his idea further to Gargi:

The point is this spirit is there. And if it is there, if man has inherited it, then what is he to do with it? In other words, what precisely is expected of him, of you and me, of Anuradha, of every one else? Darwin did not say how we are supposed to evolve further.57

The rational self attracts him to Darwin and the primal self urges him to aspire for intuitive faith, and Som is tormented. He presses Gargi to solve his dilemma. He seeks her help. She tells him "there is no harm in believing that
God exists." But Som's intellect is reminiscent of Pascal, and Pascalian perceptions fail to instil faith in him. Aftab feels that Som is destined to be doomed in tension. "You want to have faith. But you also want to reserve the right to challenge your own faith when it suits you." Aftab is both right and wrong. He is right because Som is definitely torn by the conflict between faith and doubt because it suits him. No, his resistance is not a matter of deliberate strategy. It is his innate habit, the cry of his western oriented materialistic education. He wants to believe. He struggles to believe, but he fails because he is helpless. He makes an earnest confession to Gargi "I want to assure I am not vain. I am not arrogant. I am curious. I want to know. May be over-curious but not vain." He desires to know, his earnestness to believe, becomes so intense that he is haunted by a strident song "I want, I want, I want." In pursuance of this want, Som wrecks himself. He neglects his health, business and sanity and becomes vulnerable to melancholia. For Som everything is clear cut, transparent and comfortable till he keeps himself confined to Bombay, his business and merry-making. No sooner he crosses the threshold of his material and western oriented culture, the dormant self begins to be restive. He does not go to his mother's room in the Maya because he gets haunted by her faith in Krishna and her sacrifice. Mr. Joshi depicts the two distinct worlds by juxtaposition of two sets of images. On the one hand, there
are the grandfather of Som, Bombay, Leela Sabinis, Dr. K. and Som's father. On the other hand, we have Benaras, Aftab, Anuradha, Geeta, Gargi, the Sufi Pir and the mother of Som. In between these two worlds Som shuttles - the symbol of the curious man, the thirsty pilgrim. Som, like the pilgrim in Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* passes through the criss cross of agonising experiences and *The Last Labyrinth* is a drama of a pilgrim's progress of modern times. As the pilgrim of Bunyan's novel embodies humanity, so Som epitomizes modern man in search of his self. Arun Joshi, the novelist of *The Last Labyrinth* reveals himself as a man who is convinced that western values do not provide peace, certitude and sublimity of self-fulfilment. Traditional Indian culture and values lying dormant in the darkest recesses of his mind now cry for fulfilment, and the novelist is captivated by the mysterious and the unseen. He depicts the mysterious world of Benaras, Anuradha, Aftab and Gargi with greater force and passion. They are more engaging than Bombay and Leela.

Leela Sabinis is, in a way, the symbol of the western culture. She is a scholar in her own right, though she is the daughter of a celebrated scholar. She is proud to have been divorced by her husband for her love of books. Som has to remove a dozen books in order to make love to her. Books above, books beneath, books on the sides - that is Leela Sabinis. Even when she makes love, she remembers her Descartes. She has no
inhibition. She is confident, bold and courageous. She is a rational creature and remains rational in marriage, love and faith. No emotion, no passion entangles her. Rising from the bed stark naked, Leela can throw a dispassionate look at Som and diagnose his dilemma and speak with firmness that his is a problem of identity, as if she has been engaged not in love making but an experiment to fathom Som.

There are people whose sense of identity at the end of life doesn't go beyond: I own this house; earn so much; have four children, drive the car; have so much in the bank and so on. May be such identity is not enough for you.  

Her analysis of Som does not end here. She further elaborates "may be what you want is a mystical identification; identification with a godhead as most Hindus want, sooner or later." Now the diagnosis is over. Does she think that he will recover? Will he achieve what he needs? Leela is equally sure "You haven't got the stamina, for that, I know. You haven't got the faith. You have always been a sceptic. You always will be." So, for the western culture, there is no hope for Som. He must reason and rationalize on the line of Descartes and be reconciled to his lot. In Leela's world, there should be no dilemma, no uncertainty, no doubt. The mother's impact and the father's passion goad him to part company with Leela. He needs 'something, somebody, somewhere in which two worlds
combined. No other character of this world is as forceful as Leela Sabnis, and even she fails to captivate Som.

Mr. Joshi ekes out the other world with all its mystery and elusiveness. Krishna, the God, is omnipotent and omnipresent. He is in the Maya on the shelf, in the labyrinths of Lal Haveli, in the temple in Benaras, in the man-size flame at the shrine and above all in the consciousness of Som's mother, Geeta and Anuradha. The characters symbolizing the mystical are mysterious. Geeta is sexy and responsive. She has lived life with a merry-go-lucky freelancer like Som for ten years, and yet she is engaged in cleansing her soul. Som cannot understand why his fornications are matched by her self-effacement. She loves him wholeheartedly and yet loves Krishna also.

Gargi is the daughter of a Sufi Pir who has performed miracles. The Sufi was a prince. He left his home and the princely comforts in search of God. He drank heavily and people thought he had wasted himself. But he revealed "when I am drunk Allah comes to me, stares at me but says nothing. So I drink the more. One day he will speak to me." Speak he did, before that the Sufi had to sacrifice his father and undergo suffering. It seems the father's tomb in the cottage reminds Gargi that suffering and sacrifice cleanse the soul of all impurities. The dirt and filth of actions of this life and also of many earlier lives envelope the soul and make it
opaque. The soul fails to reflect Him. Gargi lays emphasis on suffering. She tells Som that God will send some one to help him. "Some one who has known suffering." Inheriting her father's urge and emulating him, Gargi has realized the presence of God. She is a godwoman. She can be omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent. She has transcended the limits of time and space. She saves the life of Som, but she will not confirm it. God's existence and his mercy cannot be preached, they have to be realized. One who has shared his bounty and beauty becomes deaf and mute. Senses become dead to mundane responses. Gargi is deaf and dumb because she listens to only the divine and communicates with only souls. Since she partakes of the peace of God's unfathomable ocean, her presence is soothing and pacifying. Her touch works as a balm on ailing Aftab. Her words refresh Anuradha and her look tranquils Som. Mr. Joshi employs her as a symbol of a living proof of God's presence.

Aftab is another person inhabiting the mysterious world of spirituality. His ancestors had colourful and active life. But the Britishers defeated them and pushed them out of Lucknow. He is a man of suffering. He has undergone torments of hellish life, and he has come to know that money, wealth, health have no real value. Som tries to tempt him with huge sum, but Aftab replies disinterestedly. What is the use of a big balance? He does not mind if Som buys his shares. He is unconcerned. He is a practitioner, a Sadhaka, who is practising Sadhana quietly. He has known Tantra. He has known sufism. Som notices
that Gargi and Aftab are very close as if they are sister and brother because they exist on the same wave length. He asks Som if he has heard of tantras, and he explains the essence of a tantra sadhana to Som, "You have to sacrifice before you are given. You can't have your cake and eat it, too." Aftab has experienced that there is peace, there is certitude in this realization. He has sacrificed everything, yet he is not discontented. The loss does not make him bitter. Rather he informs Som with the assurance of a prophet that "God compensates you for whatever he takes away from you." He has no want, "A peaceful death, that is all I want" he says. For him death has no horror. He knows death. He lives in death. He knows that death is in the last labyrinth. He is usually secretive but sometimes he opens up. He likes Som, but he despairs of his obstinate questioning and he is goaded once to reveal himself his world to Som,

You don't understand us. You work by logic. By your brain. You are proud of your education or what you consider education. There is an understanding that only suffering and humiliation bring. Anuradha has that. Even I have a bit of it. You are empty of that understanding.

Thus, Mr. Joshi employs Aftab as a foil to Som. Anuradha has been conceived with great force. In fact, she is the most engaging and absorbing inhabitant of the world of labyrinth.
The novelist has distinguished her from others. Talking of her world, Som feels "Her was a city without a name, a city set in an oasis, plundered a thousand times and waiting to be plundered again, by men like Aftab and me, who forever lurked in its desert purlieus." It seems that Arun Joshi conceives her from a vantage point and she becomes charming familiar and yet elusive and distant. She is a living mystery. She is endowed with a rare insight, and intuitive strength.

It was as though she had been gifted with a special vision, a vantage point high above the earth, from where she could see the melee below as ordinary man could not. And it was as though the vision always left her sadder, taking away from her the hope and the laughter with which she had been born.

She has suffered a lot in her life. Aftab acknowledge that Anuradha has underwent acute suffering. Even Mr. K. Talks of it. Talking of her agony, Dr. K. presents a long list "illegitimate child, insane mother, no home. Molested as a child, witness to murders, suicides, every conceivable evil of the world." She has been uprooted. She was even traded by her aunt. These agonies and humiliations are bestowed on Anuradha, probably, because God has planned to purify her. They have croded her vanities completely, vanity of birth, of flesh, of beauty, of wealth, of knowledge. Her ego has been sublimated by suffering. She can cut her wrist and lie composed
in a bathtub. She can efface herself for others. Acute suffering has filled her with milk of human kindness and she feels for one and all. "It is just that she can't stand to see anybody fail. It breaks her heart." She has become so much large hearted as to embrace everybody. This is why she loves all. She lives with Aftab, she sleeps with Som and she is not unfaithful to anybody. She replies to Som's question with assurance that she is not unfaithful, she has never been unfaithful. She is not married to anybody and she will never marry anyone because she is for all. She cannot be possessed by one person, and she resists Som's attempt to possess her to the exclusion of all. Anuradha offers her body when Som craves for it, but she herself is not interested in pleasure of flesh. Her attitude is that her love-making is an attempt to inspire joy in others. It is sacrifice, not a sensual enjoyment. It indicates herself from shame, fear and sensual urge and the other things that inhibit a man's consciousness and obstruct his spiritual growth. Anuradha's liberation, according to Hindu Shastras, is a sign of spiritual fulfilment. Since, she, apart from Gargi, is the most developed soul, Lal Haveli is not a labyrinth for her. She is a labyrinth herself, elusive and mysterious for others, but for her there is no mystery. She identifies herself with Krishna on the Janmastami days, with the lepers, the beggars and with Gargi. It is this maturity that induces sympathetic vibrations in others. Only Gargi and
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Anuradha induce these vibrations. Gargi transmits tranquility to Som because she has attained the enlightenment, and Anuradha induces the positive urge because she has matured and is ready to attain Gargi's stage. She is on the way. Som acknowledges the vibrations received from Anuradha. Som writes,

There was mystery about Anuradha that I had yet to crack. She should have been no more to me than a woman trying to save her lover's (husband's) property. She should have been transparent. Why should she appear mysterious unless possibly there was a mystery within me that, in her proximity, got some how stirred as one turning fork might stir another. 73

So, Som gets stirred in her presence. His primal urge is kindled and he becomes restless. Gargi says that Anuradha is Som's Shakti and he must not quarrel with her and do as she wants. Though Arun Joshi has used a purely technical tantrik term, Anuradha is not Som's Shakti in tantrik sense. She is an embodiment of a power, a Shakti who, if properly harnessed, can lead him to salvation. This is why she is dispassionate in her intimacy with Som. She writes to Geeta that she went along with Som because he desired it. She is always compassionate and sacrificing. When Som is knocking at the door of death, Anuradha vows to Gargi that she would give up Som if Som is saved. She even disappears from Lal Haveli when Som chases her to snatch her away. She makes the supreme sacrifice.
It is but natural that the world inhabited by persons like Gargi, Aftab and Anuradha should be mysterious and meandering. This world has to be realized and it can be realized only through suffering and sacrifice. For Som it is labyrinth because he does not know sorrow. Aftab remarks. What does he know of sorrow. Since he has not suffered, the crusts of consciousness have not been smashed and he has not developed large heartedness. So, he cannot realize this world. It remains a labyrinth. The imagery of labyrinth is very pervasive. It is in the mind of Som, in the Lal Haveli, in Benaras, in Gargi's house, in the person of Anuradha. Som tells us, "the labyrinth, as I can see, stretches to the Maya, to Geeta, to the very edges of this beach." The labyrinth symbolism emphasizes the mysteriousness experienced by a man in quest of his identity and truth. Som fears and yet feels fascinated by it. He dislikes Lal Haveli and Benaras and Aftab. Yet he comes there. If he has to communicate with Anuradha, with Gargi, he must cross the labyrinth, and it is possible if he suffers. He cannot find Leela Sabnis satisfying because she has knowledge, not wisdom. When knowledge gets soaked in sorrow and suffering it becomes wisdom, and Leela does not have that. So, Som discards Leela and pines for Anuradha. It is a symbolical acceptance of the fact that Som turns his back on the world of reason, luxury, sensuality and sophistication, the world where mind grows and heart withers. The mystical urge to realize his identity possesses him and he yearns for Anuradha, his soul.
is developing. The dirt and filth clouding the vision are being cleaned by his suffering. He asks Gargi to help him. He asks her to confirm that God exists and she can perform miracle. But God should be realized, not learnt. So Gargi tells him "we are all children trying to reach up to a crack in the door to peep into a room." Som now understands that he will have to make efforts to reach up. Realization is attained by constant efforts. He has outgrown his earlier stage of ignorance. Earlier Som suspects because he knows there is no God. Later Som does not suspect. He does not deny. He simply cannot confirm. He is in haste to confirm. He is sincere, serious, and yearning to confirm that God exists. Only the realization is not there. He has moved on the road to realization. He wonders at the change in his motive. He had desired to purchase Aftab's shares and he engaged himself in possessing Anuradha and pining for his identity. "I had started off that evening at the Intercontinental Hotel by grabbing at Aftab's company and here we are. There must surely be some truth that connects the two." And this confession wins approval of Anuradha. His growth is further marked when he opens up. He lays bare his agonies before Gargi and Anuradha and Aftab. All of them have their answers to his quest. He poses the question that why man has spirit and what it craves for. Aftab suggests that vision are demanded. The spirit wants to have vision of God. Anuradha tells him that Darwin is not
the last word. "May be, Krishna begins where Darwin left off." And Som goes to the mountains to encounter Krishna. His journey is not that of a convert. But when he is face to face with the man-size flame burning since time immemorial, he is a possessed man. He resists Dr. K's suggestion to submit, to fall in line and accept. He knows that meditation on a column of light attracts divine bliss and reveals earlier births. He himself gains an ounce of peace. But he cannot surrender. He has not been cleansed as yet. His ego, the vanity as Gargi calls it, is still troubling. If he cannot realize God by surrender, he will feel His evidence by confrontation. He tells Gargi "I cannot give up Anuradha, you know that. In the absence of evidence, I intend to challenge the whole thing. I want to take not only those shares but also Anuradha. It scares me but I have no choice." His challenge is not that of an atheist, on the other hand, it is the last weapon to confront God. Som wants to realize God even at the cost of everything. When he loses Anuradha forever, he realizes the limitation of his challenge. God has punished him and in spite of his might, he cannot possess Anuradha. The path of confrontation does not lead to perfection. Hence 'if' and 'but' remains. But Som can pray and feel that only God can liberate him from weariness and doubts. Krishna tells Arjun in The Geeta that only he can know Him whom He wants to know.
In fact, in Som Bhaskar the reality of cultural coexistence finds a congruent figuration. Som is an authentic contemporary Indian in the urban context. He is a product of the mingling of two cultures. In him the cry for cultural coexistence finds its true voice of feeling. Whether a modern Indian, educated, sensible, sensitive and responsive to the surroundings, likes or does not like, he has to carry his double inheritance. This is our contemporary reality; we cannot forsake our share of the western culture that has percolated into the mainstream of our own culture.

The significant point to note here in this novel is that the juxtaposition between two worlds, the western and eastern comes embodied in the life of the protagonist, in his dilemma, in his split self. The locale, and other characters giving a bodily form to the spirit of the West and the East are in fact, the external correlates of the inner tension in Som.

The novel does not resolve Bhaskar's dilemma, it enacts. Bhaskar is a product of twin worlds; the western world of science and rationalism and the Indian world of faith and transcendentalism. Both these worlds are tangibly carved out by juxtaposition of symbols. Each character is a living being in his or her context and yet each is a symbol. Bhaskar's mother, his wife and Gargi form a series, a facet of reality, and a mode of endurance and faith. Anuradha is a symbol of the
undefinable, the elusive, the life spirit in women and also of the spirit of sacrifice, which is the highest gift of Hinduism. Like Graham Greene’s Sarah in The End of the Affair, Anuradha is a saint-sinner-adulteress endowed with love and compassion. Krishna is a symbol manifesting in many forms. Krishna on the cabinet shelf, in the mother’s room, Krishna whom Anuradha gifts in a silver statue to Bhaskar, Krishna whom Anuradha finds in the purple mountains, and Krishna in the form of blue flame in the temple. The western world is sublet out by Descartes, Kant, Darwin, Freud and Jung, by Bombay, by Leela Samithis, the Indian spiritual world, of faith by Anuradha Gargi, Benaras, and Krishna. It is the culmination of the authentic dilemma of an Indian with a western orientation and education. Arun Joshi had his education abroad and he stayed for quite some time there imbibing in his thoughts the ways of the western world. Both the hero and the novelist are made out of these dual forces. Arun Joshi reveals in his talk with Sujata Mathi (The Times of India) that he was influenced both by Camus and other existential writers as well as by Gandhi and the Bhagavad Gita. Bhaskar’s dilemma takes full cognizance of the post-Nietzschean western world where God is dead and the Indian life suffused with the teaching of Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita, that he is everywhere, in everything. The presence of Krishna in the mother’s room, in the human forms of the dancing pair on Janmasthami day in Benaras, in the mountains, in the blue flame burning since ages is an implicit demonstration
of the essence of Indian spiritual heritage that he (brahma God) is in every atom. Bhaskar's dilemma is born at the meeting point of the western and Indian ethos. In fact, he finds himself lost in the labyrinths. Ionesco observes, "Absurd is that which is devoid of purpose. Cut off from his religious, metaphysical and transcendent roots, man is lost, all his actions become senseless, absurd, useless." Bhaskar's situation is of absurdity, but he is not like Camus Meursault indifferent and dead to all that happens around him. He wants to know when Leela Sabnis quotes Descartes, he reminds him of Spinoza who says that both spirit and matter embrace in God and flow from him. He wants to hear from Anuradha in the guest room about the God in the hills and tells Gargi in direct words, "No, don't misunderstand me. I want to know. Probably, I want to believe. But one can't order belief." He almost faints when Anuradha finally disappears from his scene.

Till the end such strange mad thoughts prevail in his mind. He remains transfixed between believe or not to believe. In his dilemma, in his pursuit of truth, we find the most articulate voice of the predicament of cultural coexistence in the entire cavalary of the protagonists of Indian English novel.
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