

THE ROUTE FROM THE LABYRINTH TO THE LIGHT

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CHAPTER FIVE

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“The route from the Labyrinth to the light” concentrates on the route from the labyrinth of love to the light of love in the novels of Arun Joshi, especially in *The Last Labyrinth*. The protagonists in Joshi’s novels, conscious of their rootlessness, search for the meaning and purpose of their lives. They find themselves on the route leading them from the labyrinth to the light, from their negative tendencies to the positive.

The word “labyrinth” is defined by the *Revised and Updated Illustrated Oxford Dictionary* as “a complicated irregular network of passages” or “an intricate or tangled arrangement” (def. 1 & 2). Tapan Kumar Ghosh explains vividly the meaning of the word “labyrinth” and the stories related to it in his article, “The intricate Labyrinth: *The Last Labyrinth*” in the following way:

The word “labyrinth” has been used in its literal and metaphoric senses by various writers before Joshi. It can be traced back to the story of Minotaur in Greek mythology told by Ovid and Apollodorus. Daedalus, a great architect, was

ordered by Minos, the ruler of Crete, to construct a place of confinement for Minotaur, a monster, half-bull and half-man. Daedalus built a labyrinth which was famous throughout the world for its intricate structure. Once inside, one would go endlessly along its winding paths without ever finding exit.” (*Arun Joshi's fiction* 119)

Som Bhaskar in *The Last Labyrinth* is portrayed as a young, intelligent, educated, millionaire industrialist who though filled with chaos and uncertainty, possessed a passion for knowledge and belief. Throughout his life he had been suffering from an undefined hunger, “the hunger of the body” and “the hunger of the spirit” (10). Years back he had begun to experience a kind of restlessness marked by the strident song he sang, “I want, I want, I want” (11). Obviously he experienced a strange, dizzy and dark feeling about him. Once in the cave of Ajanta, a peculiar void seized him: “It was cool inside and dark. Then the walls started to float in trembling, shimmering, daubed here and there with colour. The colours were faint, as they are in dreams” (47). Since then he had been haunted by a void both external and internal. Hari Mohan Prasad rightly remarks:

“Bhaskar’s dilemma has crystallized the sociological, psychological and metaphysical dimensions of human existence into Joshi’s unique vision of modern man’s predicament. Som Bhaskar is an archetype of the new man and *The Last Labyrinth* is a fictional tour-de-force on the chaos of existence and crisis consciousness” (*Arun Joshi* 89).

Bhaskar’s journey from the labyrinth to the light had its roots in his parentage. His grandfather was a man of the town, fond of women and drink. His father, a scientist, was a different sort trying to delve deep into the truths that lived at the heart of the Universe. His dialogue with Bhaskar throws sufficient light on his personality: “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 sits in the highest heaven; He only knows. Or perhaps, He knows not” (155). Though Bhaskar was a womanizer and a boozier, his mother and wife were emblems of endurance and they possessed the capability of perceiving the inner light of life. His mother died of ‘cancer’ and ‘Krishna’, to quote his own words. His wife, Geeta, intelligent and sophisticated, had an

instinctive trust in him. He believed that his marriage was a happy one and he couldnot imagine a life without his wife.

All the same, Bhaskar indulged in affairs with several women frequently, and among them Leela Sabnis was a special person. A scholar's daughter, trained in philosophy and a believer in love, she was the clear spirit of reason. She embodied the Cartesian principle, "I think therefore I am" and asserted that, intuition or faith or even the soul could be reasoned through (80). However, Bhaskar's affair with Leela Sabnis fizzled out because he did not have the clarity of thought and the certitude of values which she possessed. Leela's world of reason and mystery could not satisfy him. What he needed was, "something, somebody, somewhere in which the two worlds combined" (82).

At a reception for the Plastic Manufacturers Association, Bhaskar met Aftab. There he chanced upon Anuradha, and noticed her as one would notice a monument: "tall, handsome and ruined" (12). He felt an intense attraction towards her, but he did not suspect in the least that she would turn out to be a labyrinth of love, in which he would be trapped. He expressed his admiration thus: "She had the features of women one saw in Moghul miniatures. I was fascinated" (19).

Aftab's Haveli became a labyrinth for Bhaskar. As Aftab took Bhaskar around his house, he was amazed by the intrinsic structure of the building, "We climbed and came down meaningless flights of stairs. Passages twisted and turned, ran through uninhabited rooms. There were terraces covered with moss, and courtyards so airless that no one could ever have sat in them" (34). Aftab later explained that his Haveli was a labyrinth, where his ancestors tricked their opponents. He told Bhaskar that there were rooms in the Haveli where he could lock a man up and he would never be found. He also clarified that the last labyrinth is nothing but death, where the light of one's life would be burnt off.

In no time, Anuradha became the centre of Bhaskar's life. In order to pursue her, he constantly made trips to Aftab Lal's Haveli and its labyrinth which became the microcosmic labyrinth of his life. He found her a mystery by herself: "There was a mystery about Anuradha. That I had yet to crack. . . . Why should she appear mysterious unless, possibly, there was a mystery within me that, in her proximity, got somehow stirred, as one tuning fork might stir another" (89). Longing frantically for her, he experienced an indefinable and agonizing hunger in the blue-room of Lal Haveli at Benaras.

Aware of the labyrinth he had fallen into, he was ashamed to realize that whenever he was with Anuradha, his enthusiasm for anything else waned. He became agitated at his own idleness, and could not be involved in anything. He was half asleep all the time, unmindful of the days passing and could not care for his family:

I had failed to make Geeta happy, or be anything more than a stranger to my children. My friends thought me a nut. I had been neglecting my companies. I had not got over my mother's death. . . . Then, there was the greatest sorrow of them all - that no one guessed: There was the sorrow of idleness. (109)

In *Arun Joshi's Fiction: A Critique*, Indira Bhatt and Suja Alexander divulge the secrets of Bhaskar's labyrinth as follows: "He cannot think of anything other than her and he neglects his business, his family and his health in an effort to win her. He makes frequent trips to Benaras with the sole motive of acquiring her for himself" (60).

On the other hand, Anuradha's life experience was a voyage from one labyrinth to another where she was denied of the real light of happiness. Apart from being an orphan at

an early stage, with a lot of troubles, Anuradha was misled by her aunt who took undue advantage of her by throwing her into the world of films. Anuradha became a prey for the producer's lust. It was Aftab who saved her from that labyrinth and gave her a new life. She began to live with him, but without getting married to him. Her opinion of marriage was also strange: "I can imagine I am married to Aftab. I can imagine I am married to you. My mother used to imagine she was married to Krishna" (128). Though Anuradha was not born of a high family or well-educated like Bhaskar, she possessed a higher sense of worldly wisdom than him. She was fond of him, and so yielded to him on many occasions, but she did not want to be possessed by him or anybody else for that matter. In one of their personal meetings in the blue-room he declared in utter despair that what he wanted in life was Anuradha and nothing else. Her reply revealed the philosophic content of her thought: "You don't want me. You don't know what you want. You don't know what is wrong and you don't know what you want" (106).

With every meeting Bhaskar and Anuradha became closer to each other, and they reached a stage when he realized that he would not be able to live without her. Their relationship

attained a metaphysical height and he was submerged in the complicated realms of the labyrinth. Bhaskar explained the mesmeric power of Anuradha: “That gaze had been forged for carrying out transactions of the soul. Looking at you like that she seemed to put her hand on your shoulder and invite you to open your heart, promising you all the while that there was nothing that would surprise her”(41).

While the trio - Aftab, Anuradha and Azizun- enjoyed a concert together, Bhaskar felt silly and isolated and wondered if the blue-room was also a part of the labyrinth. Thus he was reminded of the lifelong plea: “If only one knew what one 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” (53). Bhaskar made a futile attempt to escape from the labyrinth by going on a tour to Europe with his wife. But while in Tokyo he had a trance-like flash of Anuradha in her erotic moods, and rushed back to Gargi, the daughter of the Sufi. Gargi told him that Anuradha was his ‘Shakti’. He returned to Lal Haveli and both he and Anuradha indulged in a possessive sexual union. Again, he went to the hills and possessed her wholly, throwing on her, his entire desperate weight. One day while they were under the

influence of whisky, Anuradha informed him that she believed in a God up in the mountain. Though he loved her he could not accept the idea of a God in the mountain.

The transition from the labyrinth to the light occurs in the last part of the novel. When Bhaskar regained his health after a heart attack, he went to the mountains to collect the shares of Aftab's company which had been transferred to the possession of the temple. On the way, he learnt from his doctor that Anuradha had forsaken him in order to win a miracle from Gargi to prevent him from death. He climbed up the hill, and met an old man who had come there to die. When he reached the temple he found a man-size blue flame as the deity. There he was awakened to the light of the soul. It gradually occurred to him that it was time for him to seek God. He then remembered that people who had stared into such flames, enjoyed eternal bliss. He became restless contemplating his own death. He consulted Gargi once again about the shares he had grabbed out of revenge. Gargi wrote on the pad: "God does not work in this simple manner. God does not seek revenge (213). Bhaskar got the reconfirmation about God's power through Gargi and the transformation of Bhaskar was effected instantly.

Bhaskar came back home and was happy to see his wife, Geeta. His mental transition was vivid when he smiled at Geeta. Unusual for him, he found a rare beauty in his wife. The eyes that perceived beauty only in Anuradha, could grasp the beauty of his wife as well: "In her nightie and dressing gown she looks good, very good." It clearly establishes Bhaskar's escape from the labyrinth of Anuradha to the light of a peaceful family life with Geeta.

Bhaskar revelled in success till his life took a turn with the appearance of Anuradha. Though their relationship was illegal, Anuradha introduced the light of the Divine to Bhaskar and fuelled it to the extent possible. She continually inspired him with the thoughts of the Mountain God. However, he was so satiated, by her beauty that he did not bother about God or God's grace. Her disappearance jerked him mentally and spiritually, and as a result, he directed his steps to the mountain to see if there was a God there to console him. He attained the true knowledge here as stated in Bhagavad Gita:

However, for those living beings whose ignorance of Self, shrouding and deluding them, has been destroyed by the discriminative knowledge of the

Self, that very knowledge, like the sun lighting up all objects, illumines all that is to be known, even that Supreme Truth. (200)

Thus he naturally drifted away from the labyrinth of his dark desires to the light of God's love. His transformation is effected because of his plea for mercy. Bhaskar became God's agent because being an agent means sowing love in the human hearts where it does not exist, watering human minds with love, nurturing human lives with God's love.

The route from the labyrinth to the light is also seen in Sindi Oberoi's life in *The Foreigner*. Oberoi's experiences in life dragged him to the light. His parentage and early life made him an ideal 'foreigner,' the man who could not belong anywhere. He was not an African because neither of his parents belonged to Africa. He was not an Englishman because his father was an Indian. To America, he was not in anyway attached: "It was much too sterilized for me. Much too clean and optimistic and empty" (89). Moreover, he had not seen India until he was twenty-six. Even his coming to India was not deliberately done. "It was decided by the flip of a coin" (175-76). He was trapped in a labyrinth of

detachment and foreignness because he did not have roots anywhere in the world:

Perhaps I felt like that because I was a foreigner in America. But then, what difference would it have made if I had lived in Kenya or India or any other place for that matter! It seemed to me that I would still be a foreigner. My foreignness lay within me and I couldn't leave myself behind wherever I went. (61)

Deprived of love and care in his childhood, Oberoi's life was bound to be in darkness and he could not perceive things in the proper light. His rootlessness caused the darkness of labyrinth around him. He was blind with the sense of foreignness. He was an alien who could not belong to any place and his words and behaviour created the same impression in others. June had once remarked: "I have a feeling that you'd be a foreigner anywhere" (33). Sheila had told him sometime after he came to India: "You are still a foreigner, you don't belong here" (141). Most of the characters in the novel too have commented upon Oberoi's indifference and cynicism. Mrs. Blyth once told Oberoi "you

are just a cynic, my boy” (102). Babu too wrote a letter to Sheila, saying that Oberoi was terribly cynical.

Throughout his life Oberoi was encaged in the labyrinth of darkness moulded into a distinct shape by his indifference. Even as a boy he had thought about suicide. His indifference balanced with his incapacity to laugh. When his flat mate, Karl remarked, “I don’t know you could laugh . . .” Oberoi replied: “I can if I’m drunk enough,” an answer as thought-provoking as the remark (72). Then he sadly admitted the truth that he was not a happy person as other human beings, but an indifferent one. Sheila understood his inner state and said to him, “You are the saddest man I have ever known.” Oberoi was confused when he owned up: “I was cynical and exhausted, grown old before my time, weary with my own loneliness” (152). To him nothing ever seemed real or significant. His self-hatred is exposed in the words, “Twenty-five years largely wasted in search of wrong things in wrong places” (92). The worst of all was Mr. Khemka’s remark that he was “living, but as bad as dead” (137). These comments throw light upon the fact that Oberoi’s foreignness had webbed the labyrinth around him. Oberoi had a very successful academic career at the London University and at

Boston from where he took his Ph. D in Mechanical Engineering. He did not care for Mechanical Engineering a bit more than any other subject. Actually, it was not only Mechanical Engineering that he did not care for, but for most of the factors of his life. Having no courage to hold on to life, he confessed to Mr. Khemka, "I don't even have a reason to live" (78). This reveals the purposelessness of his life, a point that intensifies the labyrinth of his life.

Oberoi had never tried to distinguish between right and wrong, and see the light of his life. He had, as he says, "no system of morality" (54). He was not willing to know the distinction between morality and immorality. One day he asked Sheila while they were talking about June, "so you think one of those Marwari girls is really superior merely because of a silly membrane between her legs" (57). He believed that marriage "was more often a lust for possession than anything else. He believed that people got married just as they bought new cars. This attitude kept him detached from June who sacrificed her life. So did Babu Khemka. These incidents touched the core of his heart and on his way to India, he began to realize his mistakes. He had a love affair with Kathy and he could never forget the consequences of his

relationship. When he narrated the whole incident to June, he became emotional and said: “Even after several years, somewhere in the labyrinth of my consciousness the wound still bled” (61).

In India Oberoi visited Muthu, a low-paid employee in Khemka’s office, who requested him to take charge of Khemka’s business and save him and others like him, from starvation. As Oberoi was unwilling to get involved, Muthu had to convince him by saying, “sometimes detachment lies in actually getting involved” (225). Finally he sought a way out of the labyrinth of indifference and detachment, and decided to get involved. Subsequently, he took charge of the business of Mr. Khemka. With the cooperation of the staff, there was considerable progress. Thus, votary of detachment became a man of involvement giving light to his own life and that of others. Oberoi’s searchlight was transformed into a spotlight for people around him. Joshi hints that it might not be long before Oberoi would find a loving and compatible wife in Babu’s sister, Sheila. There are indications of mutual tenderness sprouting between them, and an attraction that promises a closer relationship between them which would prepare the way for the light of happiness in the years to come.

The route from the labyrinth to the light is also portrayed in *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas*, where the labyrinth is Biswas's love for primitive life. Though he tried hard to overcome the force, finally he chose his soul's call for the wild life. Biswas hated the corrupt upper-class Indian society he belonged to. Born as the son of a judge of the Supreme Court of India, he did not care for the respect that position and wealth brought him. While searching for his roots, he got entangled in a labyrinth, as the narrator says:

Perhaps as he once said, before the eye of each one of us, sooner or later, at one time of life or another, a phantom appears. Some, awed, pray for it to withdraw. Others, ostrich-like, bury their heads in sand. There are those, however, who can do nothing but grapple with such faceless tempters and chase them to the very end of the earth.

These last, he might have added, run the most terrible perils that man is capable of. (8)

Throughout Biawas's life he yearned to hide himself in the wilderness. But at every stage of his life, he had to discard the thought of it because of his commitments to his family and society. He struggled to divert his labyrinthine thought, by indulging in an affair with Rima Kaul. He used

her for his satisfaction but later on he was ashamed of himself. But Rima stood steadfast in her love. His self-disciplined life was on the decline: "It gradually dawned on me that a tremendous corrupting force was working on me. It was as though my soul was taking revenge on me for having denied it so long that it had been clamouring for" (189). In the article "A Study of the Corrupting Influence of the Technology: *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas*," Shivani Vatsa and Rashmi Gaur opine:

Of all the protagonists, Billy alone is able to overcome the predicament of modern man successfully and convincingly. He is thus presented in the form of a rebel while others are depicted as helpless compromisers. Billy, in order to engage himself for the exploration of the essence of human living renounced the outer world of physical attractions and temptations.

(Bhatnagar 77)

The light that Biswas was searching for, he found in the wilderness. He was trapped in the labyrinth of the primitive forces. His urge was so powerful that he thought he needed to travel much ahead from where he was, to conquer much more than what he had conquered already. He said to the

narrator: "I don't want to sound too pompous old chap. Becoming a primitive is only a first step, a means to the end. Of course I realized then that I was seeking something else. I am still seeking something else" (189). Biswas was determined that he would seek what he had longed for and would surely reach his goal. Being a man of ultimate vitality for whom rest and rust were impossible, he was not willing to make any compromise on his choice:

Sometimes I think the human mind is equipped with a built-in apparatus for compromises. As soon as you are faced with a difficult choice, this apparatus is switched on. It runs about here and there, brokering between various parts of man, nationalizing this, postponing that, until what is left is the conventional expedients of the age and hardly a choice. Deep down we are afraid that the price of making such choices is terrible, not realizing that the price of not making them is even more terrible. (190)

The route from the labyrinth to the light is also traced in *The Apprentice*, wherein Ratan Rathor was forced to give up his honesty to become an apprentice in the corrupt society.

He struggled in the labyrinth of corruption and crime and finally embraced the divine light. In spite of his initial hesitation, he managed to thrive on corruption for he was the child of a double inheritance: the patriotic and courageous father and the worldly-wise mother: "It was not patriotism but money . . . that brought respect and bought security. Money made friends. Money succeeded where all else failed. There were many laws . . . but money was law in itself," said his mother (20).

The Labyrinth in Rathor's life occurred in his middle age when he became overambitious. In his youth, he was an embodiment of idealism and truth, and aspired to uphold the principles of human kindness and love. But enveloped in a corrupt and materialistic society, he was forced to throw away those principles. As a result, he suffered alienation from the society. Though well-educated and well-brought up, he struggled to find a job for himself. Every rejection was a humiliation for him. In the end he got a job with the high recommendation of one of his friends. The difficulty in getting a job changed him thoroughly. His only motive in life was the growth of his career. So he indulged in corruption to gain his end. Thus he found himself in a labyrinth of

overambition. Overcome by corruption, Rathor's greed crossed all possible boundaries. He accepted some bribe in order to clear some inefficient war equipments. It filled not only his pocket with money, but also his life with self-remorse. His callous disregard led to his friend's death in the battlefield. This incident awakened his self-realization. Sitting on the steps of the temple polishing the shoes of the temple-goers, he probably contemplated over the route that guided him from the labyrinth to the light.

As Oberoi in *The Foreigner* was trapped in the labyrinth of non-involvement, Rathor in *The Apprentice* was entangled by the labyrinth of careerism. Oberoi learnt that real detachment was involvement in the life of others. In the same manner, Rathor's sense of alienation made him understand that humanism and religion should be the saving grace of man. Amidst all sorts of material comforts, Rathor was discontented. Later, immersed in the labyrinth of corruption, he was restless and feared death.

But fortunately, Rathor realized his mistake at the zenith of his glorious life. He became aware that in order to get rid of the evils in the society, there should be a change, a

change on the part of the individual. That is, every act of the individual should adhere to the principle of responsibility, or to put it simply, there is need for every individual to be a responsible member of the society. As a symbolic act of repentance, he sat at the lowest step of the temple, and dusted the shoes of the congregation. Thus he hoped to wipe off his sins of dishonesty, corruption, crime and indirect murder. Rathor also exhorted the young to lead a life of responsibility. According to him they should be ready to make a new beginning: "One must try and not lose heart, not yield, at any cost, to despair" (149).

The route from the labyrinth to the light is very curiously delineated in the novel *The City and the River*. The whole city was in a troublesome labyrinth, where the people were tortured under the Grand Master's rule. The novel is the story of the world, corrupted in every way, politically, economically and socially. The modern society is caved in the labyrinth of defective leadership. The city by the river was ruled by the Grand Master who had a dream in which he saw himself as the king of the city. In the dream he was surrounded by boatman ready to attack him. His Astrologer interpreted the dream as follows: ". . . there exists a

prophecy that speaks of the coming of a king” (23).

Determined to be the king of the city, the Grand Master, at the advice of the Astrologer, introduced “The Era of Ultimate Greatness” (23). As was expected, The Headman of the boat people did not agree to abide by the new rules made for the city and thus made the labyrinth more intrinsic.

The era of darkness began with the arrest of a boatman and a clown who had laughed at the Grand Master. The incident filled the citizens with “fear and foreboding” (23). Later, when Bhumiputra, better known as Master Bhumi, was not found, his teacher, the Professor, took up the responsibility of finding him out. He was assisted in his search by a ten-year old nameless child whom he called his Little Star. The Little Star helped the Professor to discern matters clearly. Standing as a ray of light, he guided the Professor through the right path. The police-report informed him that a group of armed men had attacked the jeep and, after a short fight, carried the prisoner away. This proved Bhoma’s involvement in the outrageous conspiracy against the Grand Master. The people of the city were so clever that they did not believe the report.

Encased in the labyrinth of the Grand Master's rule, the people struggled a lot. For example, when the Grand Master heard a piece of music as he went for his night watch, he ordered that all the musical instruments of the boatmen should be destroyed. It was in such an atmosphere of terror that the festival of the Great River had to be celebrated. There was to be a boat race, but according to the new rule, the boatmen were not allowed to race bare bodied. Moreover, they were supposed to wear the sports-shirts supplied by the Astrologer and to salute the Grand Master. The problem was that they did not, "know how to salute a man, be he a Grand Master" (90). So they had to practise it. Amidst the joy of the festival they did not want to take up any more burden and they became angry and frustrated. The people retaliated and the retaliation itself became a labyrinth. The more the people tried to retaliate, the more complicated the labyrinth became.

During the festival, the Astrologer performed a Yajna "in the tongue that none understands" (96). What the Astrologer did was to substitute the hymn of the river with a song, singing the greatness of Kings and their indispensability to the earth. The Hermit of the Mountain became angry and informed the Astrologer that he had committed a sacrilege.

After the Hermit departed, the son of the Grand Master was crowned. But the public remained cold and inactive because they were confused. During the oath-taking ceremony, most of the people were silent, especially Dharma, the Professor, and hundreds of boatmen. They were all arrested instantly and sent to the Gold Mine where they were tortured. The Master of Rallies was also jailed because of his failure in presenting the live-telecast of the oath-taking ceremony. Afraid of the torture, he committed suicide.

The true picture of the political situation in the city was revealed as the Minister for Trade and the Education Advisor involved the boatmen in another conspiracy against the Grand Master. They also decided to assist the boatmen with the Education Advisor. Ignoring Bhumi's advice, the boatmen accepted the conditions of the shock brigadier, and burnt the schools, shops, telephone exchanges and railway station. The very next day they broke open Gold Mines and set the prisoners free in the night. But during the following night, two hundred sleeping boatmen were brutally killed and thrown into the river.

There were open clashes between the boatmen and Grand Master's forces. Shailaja's brother, one of the true sons

of the city, was so much shocked by the brutal killings that he committed suicide. The Hermit of the Mountain performed a 'Yajna' for the departed souls. With the boatmen he recited some mantras in compensation for the wrong done by the Astrologer on the inaugural day of the New Era. The truth of the prophecy dawned on him that the end of the city was imminent. As the river consumed the whole city one child was left behind to tell the story of the City and the River to posterity. In the final episode, the purification of the city was wrought by the river. The labyrinth created by the Grand Master and all the people around him were wiped off by plenty of water. The ruin of the city was significant for two reasons. The oppressors were punished on one side, and on the other, the suffering rows of the river were redeemed from the labyrinth to the light.

The reader's response to the routes from the labyrinth to the light is varied. The interested reader of *The Last Labyrinth* is overwhelmed with Som Bhaskar's transformation from the labyrinth of lust to the light of love. Though he satisfies his sexual desires through his relationship with Anuradha, he finally attains the light of realization. The disinterested reader supports Bhaskar in his ambition for

progress, but at the same time, opposes his infatuation for Anuradha. The uninterested reader thoroughly protests against his involvement with her and firmly believes that his behaviour causes the tragedy of his life. The uninterested reader is not enlightened about the fact that Bhaskar has attained the light of life.

The interested reader of *The Foreigner* is startled at Sindi Oberoi's route through labyrinthine paths. But finally he is relieved to find Oberoi attaining self-knowledge and the light of self-realization. The disinterested reader is not sure whether he should justify Oberoi or not. The reader is not convinced about Oberoi's detachment or indifference. The uninterested reader, for that matter, does not agree with the opinion that Sindi has ever achieved anything in his life.

In *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas*, the interested reader finds Billy Biswas gradually coming out of his labyrinth of life and entering the world of light and happiness. As far as the disinterested reader is concerned, Biswas's route to primitivism is incredible. Nevertheless, he supports him for his search for self-realization. To the uninterested reader, Biswas's desire for happiness in the primitive world is an unacceptable route. He wonders how Biswas would ever find the light of life.

The route of Ratan Rathor in *The Apprentice* is admired by the interested reader who understands and appreciates Rathor's willingness to leave behind all his dark desires. The disinterested reader wonders how Rathor could have taken such a deviation from a point of self-degradation to a point of light. The uninterested reader is shocked at Rathor's bold step but is cynical about its possibility.

The route from the labyrinth to the light in *The City and the River* is interpreted with a lot of variations by the readers. The interested reader is thrilled at the pathetic plight of the Grand Master and his people who are entangled in labyrinthine paths. The disinterested reader justifies the death of the Grand Master but does not agree with the ruin of the entire city because of what the Grand Master and his people have done. The uninterested reader challenges nature for acting so suddenly and destroying the whole city, but does not agree with the ruin of the entire city because of what the Grand Master and his people have done. The uninterested reader challenges nature for acting so suddenly and destroying the whole city. Thus the route from the labyrinth to the light is portrayed in all the novels of Joshi.

“There is hope as long as there are young men willing to learn from the follies of their elders. Willing to learn and ready to sacrifice. Willing to pay the price.”

Arun Joshi