

Women Are Source of Inspiration in Arun Joshi's Novel "The Last Labyrinth"

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Abstract

In this paper, an attempt has been made to reflect the women position in Arun Joshi's novel. His novels touch the reader's heart with the pathetic experience of the women character and it arouses the feeling of pity and fear for them. They are the true epitome of perseverance, strength and power. Some of the female characters inspire the men to perform right work at right time

The present work is devoted to the discussion of Arun Joshi's "The Last Labyrinth" from point of Indian culture and ethos. There are many important characters in "The Last Labyrinth" but the female characters play a vital role. They show hollowness in their relationship but at last they are the source of inspiration for others.

The novel "The Last Labyrinth" shows the hollowness of modern aristocratic world. The main hero of the novel SomBhaskaris married to Geeta, who is an extraordinary woman who takes his full care and does whatever is expected from the wife. Geeta was intelligent, sophisticated, educated and aware of the pitfalls of the world. She was also sensible, loving and trusting. Som himself tells

"If discontent is my trademark, trust is Geeta's... Geeta trusts like birds fly, like fish swim."¹

Geeta believes in God, enthusiast for temples, and believes in saints and astrologers. She did not know whether SomBhaskar has betrayed her, leading adulterous life but she has "developed her own guide book of grief." She had no complaints, and no reproach. Geeta had an enduring trust in Som who moved in a high plane thinking nothing bad for others and this attitude has realized Som that there is no life without Geeta. Geeta took care of Som unto the last and served him faithfully and sincerely even at the time of heart attack and committing suicide. In spite of all this SomBhaskar's hunger for body and spirit is never satiated. At the age of twenty five he sings the song of discontent. "I want, I want, I want"²

Despite having faithful, intelligent, educated, sincere, caretaking wife he runs after ayahs, librarians, nurses, aunts, friends wives and develops carnal relations with them. But his hunger remains insatiable.

Another women i.e. Som's friend and lover LeelaSabnis was a philosopher psychologist and a polyglot who knew number of languages. LeelaSabnis called Som "asmuddled creature." She draws the conclusion that Som's problem is essentially spiritual and remains outside the scope of psycho analysis. He can meet his wants and desires through another soul. Thus Leela's efforts are unable to provide any cure.

Som's obsession of dissatisfaction has taken a dramatic turn after meeting with Anuradha. Anuradha's first meeting with SomBhaskar takes place in a Plastic Manufacturers Association in an intercontinental hotel in New Delhi. Anuradha's inner desire was to help all regardless of her own happiness. Even she shares Bhaskar's bed to please him. But this behavior does not lower her image in view of her friends and readers. Bhaskar even insist

upon her being with him all the time. But she treats him in good way and her intention was to inspire joy in him.

In the company of Anuradha, an antique looking woman his both types of hunger are fulfilled. She possesses the characteristics of medieval courtesans thus she became the centre of satisfaction in both bodily and spiritual term. Thus Gargi rightly opined "Anuradha as his Shakti." In real term she is Shakti who has transformed the Som's hunger of the body into the hunger of the spirit. Ultimately the sexual possession of Anuradha is transformed for realizing the existence of God and consequent liberation of the soul. The whole process of this march of human soul from darkness of maya to renunciation which is a philosophy of karma-yoga.

Later, Som meets Anuradha and Aftab Rai's in Lal Haveli where Anuradha is the force that makes Som a captive. The sight of Anuradha and her mehendi revives his latent passion. The character of Som is a fusion of two conflicting faculties that is instinct and reason. The instinct is very ground of Kama and his reasoning enables him to seek evidence of the existence of God.

Gargi, Anuradha and even Geeta know that Som needs not kama but Moksha. The words of Anuradha "It is not me that you want... I know that you want something. You badly want something But it is not me. That too I can see." 3

In fact, Som used to go to Lal Haveli not only for business purposes but to snatch Anuradha away from Aftab and then to grab latter's business inspite of Anuradha's humble request to leave Aftab alone. In other term, both are plunderer of Anuradha for satisfying their lust for kama. His lust was so violent that he suffered a massive heart attack from which his survival has come under trouble. At this miraculous moment, Anuradha and Gargi came for his rescue. Gargi the daughter of a Sufi Pir was telling him that "God will send someone to help you and someone who has known suffering" 4

Gargi indication was towards Anuradha and she further communicates "Don't quarrel, she is your "Shakti." The very idea of using word 'Shakti' was the divine power of Anuradha which can transform Som's craving for sex into his sublimation for the realization of spirit. Som regards Anuradha's love a purging experience and finds himself to go again and again for Lal Haveli. One day when Som was in the influence of whisky, Anuradha advises him to visit the shrine of Krishna where he realized the existence of God and consequent liberation of the soul. Similarly, Anuradha also suggests him to visit a temple on Janmastami day but he refuses. After returning to Bombay he suffered a massive heart attack and on recovering to some extent he contacts Anuradha but she expresses her inability to see him anymore which hurts his ego. Som wants her body and soul and was not ready to share a hair of her body with anyone. Som wanted to take revenge with her with his grandfather's revolver but later forgets. Not only Som but Anuradha also loves him and she is a source for self realization until she bids farewell to Som, his lust anger, pride, greed and hatred, the goal of liberation will remain illusive for him. Anuradha's dedication of saving his life is that she hands over the silver image of Krishna, number of shares, and even jewelery. Dr K also tells Som how Anuradha pleaded Gargi at the time of heart attack. In fact Anuradha persisted, wept, begged, threatened and expressed to Gargi that without Som she cannot live and will eat poison if something happens to him. She pleads when Gargi's father can provide eye sight to Aftab why could you not save Som's life and she would not go home until something is done for Som. Dr K tells Som how Anuradha got the assurance of Gargi for the welfare of Som and by giving promise to Gargi that she will not meet Som any more. This has created a miraculous effect on the mind

of Som but unnecessary reasoning was compelling him not to leave Anuradha. Gargi's thought provoking advice to Som for leaving his arrogance was that "that God does work in this simple manner. God does not seek revenge. Man's ahankra bring him revenge enough"⁵

She further advices to renounce his pride, selfishness and expect God as a saviour of mankind. These thought provoking words of Gargi and super love of Anuradha is a source of inspiration for Som. At one stage he realizes his mistake and mend his ways for a full realization of the essence of life.

Thus, the life of Geeta, Anuradha, Gargi and theories of LeelaSabnis pose to SomBhaskar as maze in Labyrinth and become a source of inspiration for him. He realizes that if the effect of Western education and cynical attitude is shunted out, love, sacrifice, and faith in God is adhered then the meaning of life can be achieved and salvation is attained. If someone adopts an affirmative attitude to life, attainment of Moksha is easy in life.

Thus in *The Last Labyrinth*, Joshi has presented all the women characters as a true women who guides him to follow the correct path and thus become a source of inspiration for him.

Note

1. Joshi Arun, 1996, *The Last Labyrinth*, Delhi: Orient Paper Backs, p.146.
2. Joshi Arun, 1996, *The Last Labyrinth*, Delhi: Orient Paper Backs, p.11.
3. Joshi Arun, 1996, *The Last Labyrinth*, Delhi: Orient Paper Backs, p.58-59.
4. Joshi Arun, 1996, *The Last Labyrinth*, Delhi: Orient Paper Backs, p.118
5. Joshi Arun, 1996, *The Last Labyrinth*, Delhi: Orient Paper Backs, p.213-14.