



**A Psychological Study of The  
Problem of Alienation in Saul  
Bellow's Henderson the Rain King,  
Herzog and Mr. Sammler's Planet**

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**Dr. Ekta Sharma**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

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The quest for freedom and identity is eternal. It is as old as creation. Satan was the first to insist on his freedom. Then followed Adam, Eve and Cain.

Even after the advent of religion, especially Christianity, man has always been fascinated by the idea of freedom. In fact, the quest for freedom has been the search for identity and a fight against the limitations of the human condition.

The Elizabethan playwrights and the Romantic poets have also celebrated the quest for man's freedom. But it has been a fact of nature as well as of history that man has failed to get unlimited freedom. This human failure leads to frustration so man begins to think that he is pitted against a hostile environment in which he is an alienated soul. Keats' 'Ode to Nightingale', Shelley's 'Ode to West Wind' and Byron's romances are superb examples of human assertion and alienation.

The existentialists represent yet another phase of thought. They regard the alienation of man as a fact of existence itself and not as a result of the dissociation between man's subjectivity and the objective conditions of the environment. They see man as a unique but isolated individual condemned in an indifferent and hostile environment. For Sartre and others, the self-estrangement of man is a natural state. They find man condemned to life and choice. Others, Russell, Huxley, and Orwell, for example, have also studied the fact of man's frustration, isolation and alienation in a highly technological and organized social context of the modern age. Russell's *Authority and the Individual*, Huxley's *Ends and Means*, Orwell's *1984* are profound studies of man's alienation in the modern world.

The same idea is reflected in modern literature. It has been aggravated in fact, because the social, economic and political organizations have become so unwieldy that the sense of choice and pride of achievement—which earlier the individual enjoyed or seemed to enjoy has been reduced to a nullity. The expression of alienation in American literature can be found in the writings of Tennessee Williams, William Faulkner, Earnest

Hemingway, Eugene O'Neill. These writers have reacted to the spectacular development of science and technology and the consequential social change. The importance of man as an individual has correspondingly reduced.

Tennessee Williams has studied the alienation and disintegration of man in the contemporary changing situation. His reaction to this problem is quite pathetic. He never indulges in seeking a compromise with inimical surroundings. His characters end up their fight against external conditions only where they had begun; there is no improvement achieved. Blanche, the heroine of *A Street Car Named Desire* ends up in a lunatic asylum ultimately. Laura, in *The Glass Menagerie*, steps into her glass house finally. Her introversion increases all the more after her efforts to step out into the objective reality have ended. Williams feels that anybody with his own desires and individuality is bound to perish as a victim of the circumstances. Eugene O'Neill's protagonists, too, such as Yank in *The Hairy Ape*, feel disturbed, alienated, and exiled from the advanced city of steel. Yank has to end his life in a gorilla cage, finding no place of refuge either with human beings or with the animals. Faulkner deals with the decay and disintegration of Southern values through the dislocated sensibilities of the members of the Compson family in *The Sound and The Fury*. Ernest Hemingway studies the scars left on man's sensibility by the war, the latest machines invented, technology, and organization. Among the modern writers, Saul Bellow also occupies a special eminence. He concentrates on the same complex problem of humanity but suggests his own dynamics of human psychology.

The meaning and implication of the word 'alienation' is estrangement from his society and even from his own individual caused by a devitalizing atmosphere. It is regarded as a psychological disease" indicating mental or psychiatric illness or insanity", and "the repression, inhibition, blocking, or dislocation of one's own feelings so that they no longer seem effective, familiar or convincing to the patient".<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Jean Campbell, ed., *Psychiatric Dictionary*, fifty edition (1940, New-York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1981), p.24.

The word alienation also suggests man's severance from society and the outer surroundings. It suggests a sense of loss of link with others. What characterizes the stage of alienation is that man feels isolated, an outcast and a foreigner in his own society. He feels burdened with the sense that he is being victimized by his society and its people.

Alienated, he broods over his own guilt too. Already, he has withdrawn from society, the Environment, and the nature of man, the cosmos and God. The final act of alienation can be self-extinction too as Byron in his 'The Giavour' says:

"The Mind, that broods over guilty woes,  
Is like the Scorpion girt by fire;  
In circle narrowing as it glows,  
The flames around their captive close,  
Till inly search'd by thousand throes,  
And maddening in her ire,  
One sad and sole relief she knows,  
The sting she nourish'd for her foes,  
Whose venom never yet was vain,  
Gives but one pang and cures all pain,  
And darts into her desperate brain..."<sup>2</sup>

This point of individual existence as in a Byronic romance is the zero point of socio-psychological relations. In a work of art such as a play or a novel, the theme may end up at this point. But normally it continues and the direction of the continuity would be the distinctive feature of the theme and technique of that work.

A novelist dealing with the theme of alienation has to create a situation of conflict between his protagonist and his environment. The environment

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<sup>2</sup> Selected Poems of Byron (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1960), p.p.213-14

will range over a series of situations that may be or appear to be of a reverse nature as compared to the character of the protagonist. The important points of contact, a series of stimuli and responses will be the different stages on the matrices of the first contact up to the last point of dissociation, i.e., the zero point. The last point of dissociation marks the point of extinction or the beginning of a positive movement of association of which the seeds are present at the zero point itself.

The mental movement of the protagonist and the effective achievement of it in terms of socio-psychological attainment will be determined as well as be determined by the fictional product that will follow the creativity or the self-assertion of the protagonist. In a tragedy, such as Lear's the attempt itself for survival results in social extinction. In a play like *A Street Car Named Desire*, the attempt at rehabilitation does not move and stops at the zero point itself. In a play like *The Hairy Ape*, the movement seems to be on the positive side, but since it is born of a psychological rejection of the environment, the actual result in social terms is negative.

In the case of Bellow, the movement after the zero point is not merely linear; it is also sectoral which is marked by a positive change in the psychology of the protagonist at one flank and the positive acceptance of society at the other. Bellow's contribution to the literature of alienation is to be studied and evaluated in the light of the movement from the beginning to the zero point of alienation and then the achievement of an area of a socio-psychological state of humanity or society, wherein the achievement of the individual harmony with the environment is a creative contribution of the individual to the cultural equilibrium and thereby to the human condition itself.

One of Bellow's famous critics is John Jacob Clayton. He regards Bellow as "a spokesman for our culture, as a defender of Western cultural tradition".<sup>3</sup> He finds Bellow standing against cultural nihilism and against the degradation of individual life in modern times. Bellow, as Clayton feels, rejects the alienation of man as a final predicament. He gives emphasis on the brotherhood of man. He is always a defender of man and his essential dignity which, in his view, can never be destroyed. Clayton

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<sup>3</sup> John Jacob Clayton, *Saul Bellow: In Defense of Man* (Indiana: Indiana Univ. Press, 1968), p. 3.

has studied the paradoxes also in Saul Bellow's fiction. At one time, he finds Bellow a defender of man's individuality but soon he seems to be discarding it.

The protagonists become alienated and masochists but at the same time, they have a desire to return to humanity. Clayton studies these contradictions in Bellow's characters. He observes: "They feel guilty, unworthy to live; they defend human beings in order to defend themselves".<sup>4</sup>

Bryant a critic of Bellow's points out that Bellow's novels present an effort of the protagonists to free themselves of the limits so that they can get a "superior life", the same "higher fate", or " grand synthesis". They want to be "marvelous". Bryant thinks that Bellow perceives two extreme reactions to the situation of life. One is that the individual has to share life with others because he finds it impossible to fulfill his hopes alone, thinking that "human life is mean and ignoble, full of degenerate prostitutes whose selfishness and cruelty must be returned in kind".<sup>5</sup>The other reaction is that man should cling to his hopes and aspirations, rejecting the world. Bryant opines that Bellow argues that the solution lies somewhere midway. Bellow's "whole man" neither abandons hope nor seeks to resist nature".<sup>6</sup>

S. B. Cohen<sup>7</sup> another critic of Bellow has highlighted the comic dimension of his fiction. He has illustrated the various aspects of comedy in his novels. Through this comic method, Bellow laughs at the follies of his protagonists and distances his views from them. Bellow exposes his characters' eccentricities when they try to be 'marvelous' as Herzog tries, or when they try to pass judgment on others thinking of themselves as superior beings, as Sammler does, or when they refuse to realize the existence of others like Henderson. They are responsible largely for their

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<sup>4</sup> Saul Bellow: in Defense of Man, p. 4.

<sup>5</sup> Jerry H. Bryant, The Open Decision (New-York: The Free Press, 1970), p.341.

<sup>6</sup> The Open Decision, p.341.

<sup>7</sup> S. B. Cohen, Saul Bellow's Enigmatic Laughter (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1974).

alienation in society. When they try to change the world according to their own standards, they suffer and fail pathetically. They have to suffer and feel humiliated when they try to feed their ego and give their individuality extra weight. Sometimes, the outer perspectives are so heavy for them that their selves start disintegrating. They behave and suffer like "suffering jokers". The outside world laughs at them. They are punished because they think and feel in their own way, not in the way society feels.

Bellow's heroes suffer, because they feel, and they suffer because their feelings are hurt. But they are also redeemed through suffering. It adds another dimension to their characters<sup>8</sup>.

And as we shall see that "The Bellow hero is neither crushed by suffering nor broken by it. He is made by it."<sup>9</sup> The sufferings of Sammler, Herzog, and Henderson ultimately create in them a new awareness, that they must recognize their responsibilities towards others and must extend their love towards them. "The obstacles to learning, to go beyond the self and be concerned for others make up much of the substance of Bellow's novels."<sup>10</sup>

Irving Malin<sup>11</sup> is one of those critics who have talked about other than the psychological and philosophical aspects of Bellow's fiction. His study of Saul Bellow's Fiction is devoted to a discussion of themes -- Moha, madness, masquerade, and Jewishness -- character, style, and images. He has also highlighted the social dimensions of Bellow's fiction.

Tony Tanner finds that Bellow has shown in his novels "an increasingly profound understanding of the dilemmas and vexations of the alienated intelligent man in his modern urban milieu, explored the complex problems of self and community, and insisted on the need to move

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<sup>8</sup> M. K. Naik & Others, ed., Indian Studies in American Fiction (India: Dhawar & Macmillan, 1974), PP. 293-94.

<sup>9</sup> Indian Studies in American Fiction, PP. 293-94.

<sup>10</sup> Saul Bellow: In Defense of Man, pp.9-10.

<sup>11</sup> Irving Malin, Saul Bellow's Fiction (London and Amsterdam: Feffer & Simons, Inc., 1969).

beyond the mood of alienation and discover more fruitful attitudes"<sup>12</sup>. Tony Tanner draws our attention to the efforts of society to suffocate the sensitive souls but along with it he asserts the indistinguishability of the human spirit: "Society may move towards its death with false concepts of progress and prosperity-- but somewhere, somehow, the human spirit will start to disengage itself to protest, to assert its need for true values, for real freedom, for genuine reality."<sup>13</sup>

Thus Tony Tanner finds Bellow an optimist who believes in the essential dignity and affirmation of man.

Chirantan Kulshrestha in his study of Bellow, grapples with the problem of affirmation. He has studied the philosophical aspect of his fiction. He says that Bellow in his novels has been interpreted " in terms of the categories of optimism and pessimism, hope and despair, joy and suffering, alienation and togetherness, good and evil and so on".<sup>14</sup> He has tried to analyze the experiences and consciousness of the protagonists in Bellow's novels. He has also criticized Bellow's mode of affirmation. He thinks that for Bellow, "affirmation is not a matter of choice for the writer; it is implicit in the act of writing."<sup>15</sup>

The survey of the criticism above reveals the various dimensions of Bellow's art explored by different critics. The aim of the present work is to study the psychology of the mind of Bellow's protagonists with reference to their experiences of the environment and of themselves.

We shall also see that the essential and existential dilemma of man marks the fiction of Bellow. Finally, just as according to Proust all Dostoevsky's novels could well be called Crime and Punishment and all Flaubers L'Education, Sentimental, so all Bellow's work could be called The Dangling Man.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Editorial note in Tony Tanner, Saul Bellow (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1965), p.1.

<sup>13</sup> Saul Bellow.

<sup>14</sup> C. Kulshrestha, Saul Bellow: The Problem of Affirmation (New Delhi: Arnold, Heinemann, 1978), p.160.

<sup>15</sup> Saul Bellow: The Problem of Affirmation, p. 29.

<sup>16</sup> Gabriel Josipovici, ed., The utable: Saul Bellow, (New York: The Viking Press, 1974).

In each of his novels, as we shall see the protagonist is a dangler, who withdraws into himself or he tries to assert himself to the world regarding himself as superior or marvelous. But he fails pathetically and ultimately changes for the finds it better to accept the whole thing as it is as he cannot change the world outside. When he changes himself in a positive direction, rest all is okay.

## CHAPTER-1

### *HENDERSON THE RAIN KING: HOME-COMING*

"Henderson the RK is the thousandth retelling of Don Quixote: the dissatisfied idealist, the bourgeois longing to fulfill his life, to transform himself and the world into something noble. The hero's dream of glory meets with reality and the hero is transformed or defeated."<sup>17</sup>

Henderson's story is the story of a romantic, who feels dissatisfied with the world, and is also suffering from a voice of his inner self, "I want, I want." He is unable, nonetheless, to know what he wants. He does not face the objective reality and is unable to accept the fact of death. In order to escape death, he is in search of salvation without knowing either the direction or destination. The voice of his inner self and the subjective nature of Henderson both confine him to himself and alienate him from his family and society.

From the very beginning, we find that the search of Henderson is not positive as he does not know what he wants. It is negative as he knows what he does not want. He thinks of himself that he is okay, never realizing the existence of others. In this state of mind, he decides to go to Africa in search of salvation. Kulshrestha points out, Augie and Henderson elude the definitions and lifestyles offered by their Instructors and decline to follow the set roles that society imposes on them. Their openness to experience is a natural derivative of their hunger for freedom.<sup>18</sup>

After a long journey in that primal savage state of humanity, he returns, but changes. During this journey, his mind undergoes crucial change, as many accidents happen there and their consequences make Henderson realize his follies with the result that he has to change. He undertakes the journey to Africa to escape from America, his country society, and home

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<sup>17</sup> John Jacob Clayton, Saul Bellow: In Defense of Man (Indiana: Indiana Univ. Press, 1968), p.166.

<sup>18</sup> Chirantan Kulshrestha, Saul Bellow: The Problem of Affirmation (New Delhi: Arnold-Heinemann, 1978), p. 95.

but he returns to the same America to accept. He comes back home with a decision to live with his wife & family and is no more disturbed by the voice "I want, I want," as he now realizes that it is not only he who wants but also "she (who) wants," "he wants" and "they want" too. The whole novel is a journey of Henderson's from his Alienation to affirmation.

The novel begins at that point of consciousness where we find that Henderson has already taken the decision to go to Africa in search of fulfillment. He is now thinking of his past and the circumstances which forced him to make this decision. So we will see the past of Henderson through his consciousness.

Eugene Henderson, fifty-five years old, stout, and bulky millionaire is fed up with his possessions, his wife, his kids, his animals' farms, money, and even with his own habits, faith, face, and soul. He is subjective and egocentric as he does not give any specific and sufficient reason for his boredom. He simply finds that "things got worse and worse and pretty soon they were too complicated."<sup>19</sup> He does not want to think about the things which are present but when they come to his mind, persistently, he cries: "No, no, get back, curse you, let me alone" (p.7). He is refusing to acknowledge facing the world of reality. He is not ready to participate in it, but it persists and then he finds the world a chaotic scene. So, he is asocial, wants to be lonely, and is not ready to face reality. We can say that for want of will, he is doomed to himself.

Henderson has been married twice. His first wife, Frances, divorced. He could not tolerate her as she always laughed at his aim of becoming a doctor in his middle age. The practical and realistic wife did not appreciate his idealistic desire. He feels that she never inspired him in his ambitions. So he left her. Now, he is living with Lily, his second wife. But his married life with Lily also is disturbed. He quarrels with her often, for she once called him "unkillable". He is short-tempered and lacks a sense of humor. He thinks that her joke is a persistent taunt for him. He wants to be unkillable in his own heart, but if Lily says so he becomes furious. He insults her before the guests and behaves with her as if she is a stranger to him. Deliberately, he creates an atmosphere of

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<sup>19</sup> Saul Bellow, Henderson The Rain King (New York: Avon Books, 1976), p.7. All subsequent page references are from this edition and enclosed in parenthesis.

intolerance, so that the family gets isolated and life for Lily becomes miserable. "The other kids stopped playing with our twins, while the wives avoided Lily." (p. 10). He tells himself the reason for his rude behavior: "because I didn't like to see her behave and carry on like the lady of the house; because I the sole heir of this famous name and state, am a bum, and she is not a lady but merely my wife- merely my wife." (p.10). This shows that Henderson is rash, proud of his name, and a man who gives over too much importance to his rich heritage and a greater weight to his individuality than it deserves. These are the traits in a man's personality which make him a socially isolated and alienated from society.

Henderson is indeed very malicious towards Lily. Lily is an intelligent woman. But the relations between him and Lily get vitiated largely because of his commitment to his own attitudes. Henderson is self-righteous; he does not know that he is unrealistic. Lily is realistic and persistent. The result is that her realistic response to his idealistic but egocentric behavior is understood as patent moralizing by him. Henderson deeply minds that Lily is in the habit of moralizing: "From start to finish this one topic, moralizing: one can't live for this but has to live for that; not evil but good; not death but life; not illusion but reality." (p.18). Henderson can't listen to such moralizing and in order to silence her and in addition, to torture her, he says:" I'm shooting myself. I didn't forget to pack the pistol. I've got it on me now." (p.10). She cannot bear all this raving and runs away, crying. Henderson's teases and tortures her exactly this way because his threat of suicide reminds Lily that her father had committed suicide in the same manner. So he repeatedly threatens her. Thus, we find Henderson rude, insulting, bitter and a nuisance to his wife and children. He feeds his individuality and gives too much importance to himself without accepting the existence of others. These reasons make him feel alienated from his wife and society.

Another reason and a very potent, psychological one, for further alienation is an auto-suggestion, rising as is from his unconscious. Henderson hears a ceaseless voice in his heart that says: "I want, I want". He tries to forget it by keeping himself busy but in vain. His heart is dissatisfied always. Suffering from a Romantic temperament, he cannot see the right way out of this problem. He feels disturbed. In fact, he now

shows the symptoms of psycho-physical weakness. At Vezelay, he is unable to have intercourse with Lily even when she desires it. In this state of disability, he weeps and cries. He finds himself weak and thinks. "This is my last day. Death is giving me notice." (p.20). Thus, he connects his sexual weakness with death. Consequently, he gets confined totally to himself and feels more and more alienated from all.

Henderson is conscious, nevertheless, of his malady. He wants to keep himself busy in order to maintain his balance. Still, his mind keeps oscillating. In fact, he starts behaving unpredictably. He is unable to stay with one idea or a business for long. For example, he starts breeding pigs with great excitement. He finds the animals a part of his own, but soon "it was curious that I lost interest in them" says he now he decided to do something else. He remembers that once a student of psychology told him to get rid of his anger by inflicting it on inanimate things. By doing so he would be able to behave in a civilized manner and would spare the living things. So, having failed with pigs, Henderson tries to exercise this idea. With all his heart, he starts chopping wood, lifting, plowing, laying cement, and cooking mash for the pigs. But this also does not help him. He continues to be disturbed by the voice in his heart, "I want, I want." The voice symbolizes the unfinished longing of Henderson. He wants to get rid of this voice but fails. Having attempted all possible varieties of solutions he finds ultimately: "But there comes a day, there always comes a day of tears and madness." (p.24). No way out thus.

Henderson takes another remedy to get rid of that madness and relax himself. He now begins to play the violin, the instrument which belonged to his dead father. The action, however, does not amount to more than a death wish. He says "My main purpose was to reach my father by playing on his violin." (p.30). He wants to speak to his father whispering, "Oh, Father, Pa. Do you recognize the sounds? This is me, Gene, on your violin, trying to reach you." (p.30). Thus he is trying to communicate with the dead father more than the living. He is interested more in creating a separate world of his own through his violin than in the real world. This distance alienates him more from the people outside. He is talking to his father also because he is not fully convinced that the dead are utterly dead. In fact, it seems from this act of his, that he is losing hold of his mind on the objective reality of things. For him, the living

does not exist and the dead are not really dead.

This breach of the logical mind in him revives phantoms from the dead past. Henderson is reminded of certain traumatic experiences which broke him down and from which he has not recovered yet. When he was in the army, he was disgraced by four medics who “grabbed me, right at the crossroads, in the open. They stripped me naked and they soaped and lathered me and shaved every hair from my body”. (p.23). In this condition, many men and women looked and laughed at him “shivering, ugly, naked.” (p.23). These are the experiences a man should overcome with age or forget. But he does not, rather he clings to them as the very meaning of life:” These are things of men never forgets and afterward truly values.” (p.23) he recalls. This is a topsy-turvy of the sense of values in him.

Once while chopping wood, his nose breaks and bleeds. Henderson feels that these blows are teaching him true knowledge. “Does truth come in blows?” (p.23) he asks himself. Truth does not come to him as a result of these blows. The question only shows that he is a masochist. Thus Henderson is disturbed by the present time as well as laboring under the skeleton of his past still with him. He also feels very sad whenever he thinks of his brother Dick’s death. He also remembers that he was once deceived by Lily when she told him a lie about the death of her mother, though the mother was not actually dead at that time. So he rakes up little things and magnifies his sufferings. He is still unhappy with Lily as she once tried to con him. So, away from the living, he seeks the company of the dead.

He is not at ease with Lily and is disgusted with his family life. Lily remains busy with her painter for the completion of her portrait. Henderson finds that she does not clean the home well, nor does she look after the children. The absence of these simple domestic chores aggravates the disturbance of his mind. These things make him crazy with anger. He himself says: “To somebody else, these things may have been given, but that somebody is not me.” (p.29). So, he suffers, but people like Lily laugh at the way he suffers. His condition becomes that of a suffering joker. Once Lily comments on his sufferings: “Gene, when you suffer you suffer harder than any person I ever saw.” (p. 32).

Henderson feels that he is a displaced person. Unable to understand Lily, he asks her to go away from him. (p.33). Symbolically, in asking Lily to go away he is banishing reality from his personal world. Lily knows that he can't accept reality easily. He is hesitant to keep the child with the family which her daughter Ricey has brought up with her. She found the child lying somewhere. Lily asks Henderson emphatically to keep the child. He is ready to talk over this issue. Exuberant that he has accepted the proposal, Lily exclaims: "Gene I'm very glad. It's good that you are more able to accept reality." (p.34). But he explodes: "What? I know more about reality than you ever know. I am on damned good terms with reality, and don't you forget it." (p.34). He loves to live in illusions. Actually, the reality which he accepts is his version of reality. It is purely subjective.

Henderson is a man of loose temperament. Once he cries so loudly at Lily that their maid, Miss Lenox, dies in the kitchen. Her heart stops under the shock of his cries. He revels in this incident and comes to the conclusion: "You, too, will die of this pestilence. Death will annihilate you and nothing will remain, and there will be nothing left but junk. Because nothing will have been and so nothing will be left." (p.37).

This shows that Henderson is nihilistic. He believes in the void of his subjectivity. He has no quality of affirmation at this time. He cannot think and act peacefully. He cannot participate in the living things.

Disgusted with all and himself, unable to do anything in society, behaving abnormally, believing in nihilism, afraid of death and yet in love with it, completely alienated, he now moves towards Africa, the dark continent. Henderson "who feels like a displaced person, flees from the piled-up burden of his life and from the unredeemed death he sees before him. He decides to find salvation not in civilization but in the primal, savage state."<sup>20</sup>

He goes with a trustworthy guide, Romilayu, an old man. First of all, he goes to Arnewi village. Henderson tells Romilayu that so far he has been running away from society. He says: "I was still not ready for society. Society is what beats me. Alone I can be pretty good, but let me among

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<sup>20</sup> Saul Bellow: In Defense of Man, p. 166.

people and there's the devil to pay" (p.45). It is now to be seen whether he is able to escape from his subjective self to affirmation and acceptance of the objective world. His journey in the dark country is very important in terms of his changing attitudes. Secondly, his personality is fully exposed here, to an elemental environment.

Romilayu guides him and explains everything to him. First of all, he is introduced to Italo, the Prince of Arnewis, and is invited to wrestle with him, i.e. the Prince. Being a man from the world of civilization, Henderson hesitates to fight but he goes to wrestle with the prince, reluctantly though, and wins. Thus he asserts his physical strength. Here starts the second phase of his life: his assertion.

Previously, or in the first phase of his life in America, he was confined to himself. He hardly asserted himself in public. But here the scene is different and may provide positive opportunities for change.

The first chance offers to do well: In Arnewis, people are very unhappy as their cattle are dying of thirst. The drinking water of the cattle is polluted by the frogs. Arnewi people are passive; they suffer this calamity thinking that it is a curse of their gods. Henderson cannot stand this. He now wants to do something for the survival of the cattle. His heart burns with a great desire to assert himself as the greatest benefactor of the Arnewi. He plans to do something to solve this problem and says to Itelo: "Look here, I'm a kind of an irrational person. Myself, but survival is survival." He is eager to do something: "I hope I may die... if I don't drive out, exterminate, and crush those frogs." (p.64). His ideas are very strong, even more than his character. About his ideas, he himself says: "they seem to get strong while I weaken." (p.83). Thus, for a while, it seems as if he is going to recover from his negative self with an act of humanitarian valour by saving the lives of the cattle. He thinks that he will be able to quench the thirst of his heart. The result, however, as we shall see, is the opposite.

Henderson does not deviate from his purpose. He meets queen Willalata and her sister Mtalba. Henderson finds Queen Willalata magnificent. She seems to represent reality and stability. In the presence of the Queen, Henderson however gets as confused as he had ever been and shows that he has no real knowledge. He says that the world is strange to him. The

queen reminds him that the "world is strange to a child. You are not a child sir." (p.73). Actually "Henderson dreads the world "because of death," and tries to keep it mysterious, as a child does."<sup>21</sup>

The Queen gives him the knowledge of Grun-tu-molani which is a native expression for 'Man wants to live'. Henderson is impressed by her wisdom. He learns 'Grun-tu-molani, but not the life with all its limits. Secondly, it is important to notice that the power of Queen Willatale is defective. It is suggested by a cataract in her eye that blurs her vision. She makes no attempt; as she believes in quietude, to pure the water which is infested by the frogs.

Now Henderson wants to give something in return of that knowledge. The sister of the queen is very much fascinated by the physical strength of Henderson as he has defeated Itelo and has an impressive stature. She learns that she has lost her heart for him but he says, "Hell with her heart". (p.70). He is not concentrating on marriage, happiness, children, family, or love, but on the voice "I want, I want". He wants to define what he wants and has been wanting so far. He reminds himself: Who-who was I? A millionaire wanderer and wayfarer. A brutal and violent man driven into the world. A man who fled his own country, settled by his forefathers. A fellow whose heart says "I want, I want." Who played the violin in despair, seeking the voice of the angels and who had "ruined the original piece of goods issued to him" and "was traveling to find a remedy." (p. 67).

Henderson is well aware of his true condition. He knows that he is behaving strangely, but at the same time, he wants to do something. And the opportunity is at hand.

The attempt results in an accident. While attempting to free the water of the frogs Henderson blows off the walls of the cistern itself. Thus in an effort to solve their problem, he creates more problems for them. In an agony of self-defeat he cries, " Itelo, kill me! All I've got to offer is my life. So take it." (p.94). But they (Arnewis) don't kill him and ask him to go away bidding him a final goodbye. Henderson's condition here is very pitiable. He is unhappy with the result. He had thought it to be the

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<sup>21</sup> J. H. Bryant, The Open Decision (New-York: The Free Press, 1970), p.353.

greatest day of his life, but he has missed the chance. He feels torn inside while he cries "Why for once, just once; couldn't I get my heart's desire."(p.95). He is more disturbed by the fierce desires of his heart. Clayton remarks "The heart's desire is more important than the thirsty Arnewians"<sup>22</sup> He is, still, more interested in fulfilling the desires of his heart. He only uses the situation to accomplish the desire of his heart. So, he has not developed in a positive manner by this time. He continues to be subjective. But it is certain that this incident changes his mind to some extent. It is for the first time that he questions his knowledge and confidence. He realizes that he has been impatient and has acted in an irrational manner. His act was unguarded. He could not think peacefully before doing the act. He realizes that it is his impatience that creates problems for him. So, he has had to suffer and now repents. Now for the first time, he regards himself as "an old failure." (p. 97).

After the frog business and its horrible outcome, Henderson tries to restrain himself. He thinks that now he would be able to control his rashness and follow a policy of waiting and patience. Though he says this, it seems not yet worthy of trust in actual fact. Soon after, he shows signs of impatience. Henderson and Romilayu move towards Wairi village. A man outside the village asks Henderson to stay till they examine him and declare him harmless, only then he will be allowed to enter the village. Henderson feels badly upset while waiting. He thinks he is "the worst waiter in the world". (p. 103). Sometimes before, he tried to be patient but he is unable to be so. He is suffering from the "anguish of spirit."(p. 103).

Henderson continues to have a nostalgic spirit. He continues to think about the past when he wanted to become a doctor but failed. Repeatedly, he feels unhappy about those things which could not be accomplished. Whenever he finds time, he goes back to his past. Even now he continues thinking of himself "It's you who make the world what it is. Reality is you." So in this second phase of his experience, Henderson is quite subjective. He thinks of the objective world in terms of his subjective reality. But he will have to overcome this subjectivity before he is reaffirmed. He will do so when the knowledge of truth dawns upon him.

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<sup>22</sup> Saul Bellow: In Defense of Man, p.170.

But the knowledge does not come easily. To quote Henderson himself "truth always comes in blows". He has yet to receive more blows.

Before entering the village, Henderson's gun is taken away from him and he is made to pass the night with a corpse. So, he is made to touch death and face it. But he does not want to do so. And in spite of the instructions of Romilayu to keep quiet and calm, he decides to drag the dead body out of the hut. He feels outraged and maddened by the presence of the corpse. Symbolically the meaning is that he cannot confront death. So he lifts the dead body on his back and places it outside. But he is captured soon and is taken to King Dahfu.

Henderson is still under the illusion that he is able to face reality and indeed he thinks he loves reality. When he meets Forko, the King's uncle, he boasts of himself, saying: I have always argued that Lily neither knows nor likens reality. Me? I love the old bitch just the way she is and I like to think I am always prepared for even the worst she has to show me. I am a true adorer of life, and if I can't reach as high as the face of it. I plant my kiss somewhere down. (p. 127-28).

This shows that Henderson is still under the illusion like Don Quixote that he is ready to face the most difficult possible reality. But we will see that he is not. He has not yet faced the reality. He has been an intruder always and everywhere but has not yet been truly punished for that. Soon we will see that he behaves like an intruder and impatiently but this time the result is so much for him that he has to confess the real reality and tries to improve.

When Henderson meets Dahfu, the people of the town are celebrating the rain ceremony. King Dahfu tells him about the rituals of his town. The king keeps more than sixty wives and enjoys tremendous power. Henderson is fascinated by the position of the king: "you seem to be in a very attractive position" (p.133N says he. But the king tells him that he is in power as long as he is, in his own words "in possession of my original youthfulness and strength." (p.133). He lives continuously under the threat of death. He will be strangled the day he is unable to satisfy all his women. It is King Dahfu who actually gives Henderson the true wisdom. He promises him to redeem himself of the phantoms of death and to teach him how to face reality and death.

The way Henderson has been living is no way of living. He has always adopted his version of reality and always has been afraid of death. But now, he will have to learn how to face death and reality. So he is made to confront death the first night of his arrival and is treated not as a respected guest but as an intruder. In his discourse with him, the King tells him that he has no absolute power yet. To gain it, he will have to capture a lion Gmilo, who is supposed to carry the spirit of his father. It is a custom of his town that the king has to capture the lion who is supposed to contain the spirit of the previous king. After he captures it, he enjoys supreme power. These people live under the shadow of death and they enjoy this hilarious life. Henderson is very much impressed by all this.

Now comes the rain-ceremony of the Africans. This is very significant, as it proves to be a turning point in the life of Henderson. It is only after this occasion that he attains realization. After this realization, the affirmation of the hero begins. Henderson sees the Africans celebrating the ceremony to invoke the rain god. Two large statues are made, one of Humat, the mountain God, and the other of Mummah, the Goddess of rain. They are to be lifted and then the rain will come. Turombo, one fellow comes to lift them. He lifts the God Hummat but cannot lift Mummah. When Henderson looks at all this his heart again aches to do something marvelous.

Unconscious of the consequences of his action, he offers to lift the statue of Mummah. The Bunam, head of the natives, warns him "you are blind". But Henderson does not bother to think over his advice. He goes straight to the Goddess Mummah to give full recognition to his inner voice, "I want, I want". He is anxious to prove himself extraordinary without recognizing any limit or outcome. He says "I really do not wish to live by any law of decay." (p.161). This shows that he does not want to be destroyed. He lifts the goddess and thus becomes the Rain King or Sungo in the native language. He feels very happy and satisfied: "After my great effort, I sat quietly. My violent feelings seemed to have passed off or to have been transformed." (p.164). He now regards himself as a "gainer personality". Thus, he is trying to satisfy his ego. This is the climax of Henderson's efforts to assert his individuality. This success of Henderson's marks the Zenith of his egocentric search for personality. He now thinks that he has quenched the thirst of his heart's Voice.

After this, starts the third phase of his life--- realization and acceptance. His mind will develop now as we will see during this stage of realization. He will have to suffer for his egocentric behavior and actions and then from that suffering, he will realize the follies and weaknesses on his part and then the way to affirmation will open to him. When the lifting ceremony is over, the sky begins to fill with clouds and it begins to rain heavily. People now begin to anoint him, their Rain- King. They strip him naked and make him stand in the heavy rain. He is also thrown into the muddy water. His whole body is stained with mud. Now he thinks pitifully that he - the restless seeker, rude stubborn man, will be crushed to death. For the first time in his life, he yells for mercy. But he also knows that there is no mercy. He feels convinced of the ultimate truth that "That will be done. Not my will, but thy will." (p.169). He now surrenders and repents and realizes his mistake. He now feels that Turmobo, the man who lifted the mountain, God, could also lift this goddess, but he was conscious of the consequences. He accepts his sufferings now "it served me right for mixing into matters that were none of my damned business" (p.171). He finds that in the rain, his upper lip has grown long, his nose distorted and his eyes black and huge. Through these blows, he thinks, that reality is coming to him. He has also to wear the transparent clothes of the Rain King.

Henderson's mind develops more and he learns more, realizes more, when King Dahfu teaches him the lessons of confronting reality. Dahfu has a lioness Atti, his pet. He takes Henderson to her. He also tells him that he has learned 'Grun-tu-molani'- Man wants to live' but he will also have to learn how to face death. The man, who wants to live, must be prepared to face and accept the fact of death and reality.

Bryant also observes: "The desire to live, which Henderson begins to learn from the Arnewis, entails the imperative of learning to face the most terrible of all realities: death, the end of the self. Upon the acceptance of this lies the hope for moral action."<sup>7</sup> Henderson is reluctant to go to the lioness. He is scared, he admits.

Previously, Henderson had boasted of his fearlessness, saying "Death and I are just about kissing cousins." (p.144). Forcibly, the king asks him to imitate the lioness and to come to hear it. Henderson hesitates, but the king tells him that "she is unavoidable". He will have to face it. The

lioness in the book represents reality. So Henderson cannot avoid reality. He will have to face it ultimately as it will teach him much more than anyone else. The king knows that Henderson has not accepted the possibility of his death and is trying to escape. He believes that if a man imitates a lion and roars like it, he can have the spirit of a lion. He wants Henderson to do all this and only this. But Henderson now realizes that he is not even ready to face that much of reality. He is fed up with the lessons of the king:

“What else am I supposed to do, king for heaven's sake? First I was stuck with a dead body and then thrown into a cattle pond, clobbered by the amazons. Okay for the rain. Even the Sungo pants and all that is okay. But now this?” (p. 222).

The king asks Henderson to be patient. Henderson has to be patient and he has to walk in fours and roar like a lion. The king wants to transform Henderson, as he holds him to be his best friend.

After this experience, Henderson writes a letter to Lily in which he mentions the details of his journey. Here, we find that Henderson is a changed man with different attitudes towards himself and the objective reality. He now realizes that his suffering is the result of his rashness. He always did things without realizing their consequences. Now he also confesses his weaknesses and tells himself " Reality, oh reality. Damn you anyhow reality." (p.245). He is now accepting, though cursing, reality, while previously he had soothed himself with the illusion that he is on good terms with reality. He is in the process of coming in terms with reality. So, he admits: “how I had boasted to my dear Lily. How I loved' reality.... I love to it more than you do. But oh, unreality, unreality, has been my scheme for a troubled but eternal life.” (p. 258).

He also realizes that the voice ' I want' should have also told him "She wants", "he wants" and they want". He also realizes the importance of love now. As he says, “And moreover, it's love that makes reality. (p.241). This shows that Henderson is now admitting his follies and he is moving from his subjective world into the objective. For the first time after his departure from America, he misses Lily and his home badly.

It is relevant to recall here that Henderson has been obsessed with the idea of death and the world of the dead as if he has been projecting his

persistent fear of death. The king also guesses this and he tells Henderson that "Death is on your mind" and "you are exceptionally given to it." (p.249). Henderson admits that "Over the years, I've gotten involved with it a lot". (p.249). The king advises him to come into the world of life and Henderson will come in the world of living towards the end.

After a short while, Henderson has to face the death of the king. The king has accepted his situation unconditionally. He has also angered the priests by keeping Atti, against the rules of the tribe. Though Henderson has warned him against the plot of the Priest to take the king's life, he neglects to act against this plot. He thinks that he cannot take precautions against the plot as one cannot take precautions against death and reality. So, Dahfu goes to capture Gmilo, the lion supposed to contain the spirit of his father, taking no steps to protect himself against the conspiracy. The priests fix the trap: it fails to hold and the king is killed by Gmilo.

Henderson is badly shaken at the sad demise of the king. He weeps and cries. He puts the blame for the king's death on himself thinking of himself as an unlucky man. He says, "Oh, King, King, I am a bad luck type. I am a jinx and death hangs around me. The world has sent you just the wrong fellow." (p. 262).

Actually, he is not the least responsible for the death of the king. It is all his raving and grief. But it certainly shows a change in his behavior. The same Henderson who was once proud of his wealth, name, and state, now recognizes himself as a "wrong fellow" and "contagious, like Typhoid Mary". (p.262). He also questions his ability now. "But what ability have I got, I can't name three things in my whole life that I did right." (p.264). He is thus able to accept his limitations of knowledge and action both. He also finds Lily a marvelous woman now, while previously he had hated her, and abused her before the guests.

Another significant change in the character of Henderson is his attitude towards suffering. Earlier in his life, "suffering had a certain spice". He loved it like a masochist but later on, it became merely dirty and now "Damn. I was tired of being such a monster of grief." (p.263). He is fed up with suffering. This shows that he is ready to give up the pose of a sufferer, and is able to face it. He is also eager to enjoy happiness.

Soon, we find Henderson struggling with his violent feelings. When the

king dies, he wants to avenge his death. He waits to kill the man responsible for Dahfu's death. So, he does retain violent feelings. He gets hold of a man of the Priest and thinks of strangling him. But he finds that he is able to control his animal feelings. He changes his mind and says "I'll break some of his bones" and after a minute "All right, I won't break bones. I will beat him: (p.273). Actually, he does not even beat him. Thus, we see that he has mastered his violent feelings. He spares the man who is under his control at a time when he feels sure he has a right to kill him. He takes with him the lion cub which is supposed to contain the spirit of Dahfu and decides to move.

Henderson realizes his physical weaknesses too. Once he had thought of himself as a powerful, rugged man and had told Lily "you'll never kill me, I'm too rugged." (p.2.0). We know that this consciousness of strength was an illusion. This illusion was strong enough to prevent him from confessing his real weakness. But now he is a changed man. He is no more proud of his physical strength nor of his illusion. He does not want to kid himself now. Here is a stage of further development toward acceptance.

Henderson learns more from the death of the king. Bryant says "Henderson has more to learn than the unconditional acceptance urged on him by Dahfu".<sup>23</sup> Henderson finds him face to face with the tremendous power of Gmilo which batters "at the very door of his consciousness." Henderson sees now that his search for reality has been only pretence. That is why his voice cried "I want". His spirit was asleep. Confronted with the lion's roar, he is "blasted away." from his former avoidance. He bursts his spirit's sleep... Having been awakened by the road of Gmilo, Henderson arrives at a higher consciousness.<sup>24</sup>

The death of the king offers him a chance to be the king as the Rain King is supposed to take this seat if the king dies. But he frankly admits to himself and his guide that he wants to return to his home, though he was nothing there. Moreover, he finds that he will not be able to satisfy the wives. He recognizes that in this age he needs "human voices and

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<sup>23</sup> The Open Decision, ( New York, The Free Press, 1970), p.355.

<sup>24</sup> The Open Decision, p.356.

intelligence"(p.265) rather, than the glory of an empty kingship. Thus positive qualities in him are now urging him to move toward his own people. One another reason for his rejection of the King's position is that he does not accept the danger and enmity of the Priest and his people. He now knows how to save his life. He no more acts impatiently or in a rash manner. His fate lies in America. He has faced death and reality and has also stilled his voice. He has gained the wisdom of facing death, and saving life, too. Bryant finds him "reborn"<sup>25</sup> at this point.

His mind is completely changed in the positive direction. He now realizes: "I'm not what I thought I was". ( p.275). Once he had left his wife and children as he felt disgusted with them but now he finds that he loves them very much. He himself says, "I had to get back to Lily and the children, I would never feel right until I saw them, and especially Lily herself". (p.275). Previously he had asked her to go away but now he wants to go back to her. This acceptance of Lily shows that he has accepted reality, too. He wants to go back home where "my wife loves me," says Henderson. Previously there was no place for love in his heart, and he was full of hatred and bitterness. But now he has realized the importance of love and the human heart. He is so content with the state of things that even a semblance of love is enough to sustain him, as he says "And even if (Lily) only seemed to love me that too was better than nothing". He no more believes in nihilism. He wants to have faith in positive values. He finds that "whatever gains I ever made were always due to love and nothing else." (p. 284).

Now Henderson's mind thinks peacefully. He broods over the things and realizes the facts. Previously, in the first phase of his life, he had quarreled with Lily because she called him "unkillable" though jokingly.

Now he confesses to Romilayu "Listen to me, Romilayu I'm unkillable. Nature has tried everything. It has thrown the book at me. And here I am". (p.277).

He is anxious to return home now. He telephones Lily and cries enthusiastically " I'm coming home Sunday." (p.278). This shows his promise to live in society and family. "Reconciled to reality, Henderson

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid, p.356.



## **CHAPTER-II**

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### ***HERZOG: A POSITIVE JOURNEY***

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In Herzog, Bellow presents the problem of alienation through the main character Moses, who is an academic intellectual and an agonized self-betrayed scholar. With compelling urgency, Herzog strives for some meaningful human values. The story of the novel contains Herzog's wanderings from New York to Martha's Vineyard and back to New York, from New-York to Chicago, and finally from Chicago to Ludey-ville, a village in Western Massachusetts. In an acute sense, this whole novel is a journey of Herzog's from 'Alienation to Affirmation'. His journey from one place to another is symbolic in terms of his changing attitudes. The problem presented in the novel is alienation and the inbuilt solution of this problem is affirmation.

The novel starts from the end, i.e. the novel starts technically where the story ends chronologically. The opening sentence of the novel: "If I am out of my mind it's all right with me".<sup>27</sup> shows that Herzog is in the final stage of his experience, where he accepted his situation wholeheartedly, and is at peace with himself. The one-time loud and lousy intellectual and historian of analytical ideas is lying on his couch in Ludeyville, calm and quiet. He is recalling his past in retrospect. After knowing the whole story, we can divide it into three stages according to the state of the mind of Herzog.

The first stage of Herzog is that of illusion or self-delusion. To begin with, Moses Elkanah Herzog at forty-seven possesses sound and remarkable intellectual potential. He is giving adult education lectures in a night school in New York. He has a promising personality and he is doing Ph.D. He is so much confident that he regards himself as fit enough to undertake a vision of the old Western Faustian ideology and investigation of the social meaning of Nothingness. It is a difficult

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<sup>27</sup> Saul Bellow, *Herzog* (England: Penguins Books Ltd., 1983), P.7. All subsequent page references from the text are from this edition and enclosed in parenthesis.

problem the understanding the ultimate essence of existence, the vision, we might say of a sort of "picture less void", in the words of Iris Murdoch. The religious and personal investigation and realization of the problem have been a riddle to great thinkers since Plato to the moderns. Herzog wants to have that supreme achievement in practical terms as he wants to give America a solution for living a life where peace can be blended with morality. Moreover, he thinks that he can discuss the follies of romantic temperament which he himself does not share. He wants to correct some "Romantic errors" about the uniqueness of the self. He has inherited the values of a strict Jewish discipline. He wants to be the "marvelous" Herzog. He also maintains the Jewish family- feelings and high value of love, without realizing that these high feelings of family and love are difficult to be found in contemporary society.

Herzog is too tense and intelligent for the world around them. His mind is over-wrought with motives and ambitions. His childhood world (his past) is the only reality for him - all this shows that he himself is suffering from a romantic temperament. With these much of burdens of life on his mind and in a hostile environment, it is to be seen how far he will last with his clear vision of his motives, ambitions, and achievements. Indeed it is doubtful if he understood his individual character and his potential at this stage.

Herzog was clear and normal enough in April. But within a short while "he had been overcome by the need to explain, to have it out, to justify, putting in perspective, to clarify, to make amends." (p.8). This shows that his mind was under a climactic strain. He began to totter under the burden of his own excitement. He seems to have developed a guilt complex, as if, of being and knowing what the others did not know. Therefore, under the pressure of that self—chosen mission, he began to ramble, towards the end of May. He started breaking down, showing signs of psychic disturbance. His students found him absent-minded. He was taking more interest in historical analysis, and was trying to knock down every great thinker of past and present. He could not teach his students well. His notes in the class were "fragments - nonsense syllables, exclamations, twisted proverbs and quotations..." (p.9). He himself suspected at times that it might be "a symptom of disintegration." (p.9). Herzog continued his work, nevertheless.

Herzog was not much conscious of this little disturbance of mind, for, things were natural and normal in his living. But meanwhile he receives a terrible personal shock. This is given by his second wife Madeleine, beautiful and attractive, whom he had chosen over his first wife Daisy.

Madeleine leaves him for his own best friend Valentine Gersbach. This deceit of his chosen wife and best friend is too painful for him. He, now, finds that his whole life, his career, and money have been ravaged by Mady. He had done all the things for Mady. He had bought her a house in Chicago, as she could not live in Ludeyville villa. Now all that money spent appears as money-wasted. He had also resigned from his job as a lecturer because she did not want him to be an ordinary professor. Herzog did everything to please her, yet she was dissatisfied, as she found Herzog, "dictator" and a "regular tyrant" "who bullied her". (p.45). So, she left him along with her daughter Junie and decided to live with Valentine. This separation was too painful for Herzog. He was not only in love with Mady; he could not also bear to leave his daughter.

This infidelity of Mady and the immoral act of a friend breaks Herzog into pieces. He is disturbed, emotionally shaken and finally, his intellectual life is overshadowed. Herzog abandons his research, as he finds himself in a state where he cannot justify his work. He feels so much upset that he cannot comprehend his own character. Sometimes, he behaves as if he is narcissistic, masochistic, and anachronistic. He cries, weeps, and behaves like a clown in his suffering. He accepts suffering in order to attract the attention of people towards his personal tragedy. He feels himself as an outsider in society, out of tune with it. He finds that no one in the society holds these values which he cherishes. Thus, he is out of tune with time and reality too as it is around.

In a state of bewilderment, Herzog falls into the hands of those people who act like machines and whom Herzog later calls "Reality-Instructors". They have perfect control over themselves, their emotions and their actions are perfectly calculated as they want to control others too. They represent the wordliness with which the Bellow protagonist is clogged. To Herzog they stand for "a cold and alien world". They want to teach him the lessons of their view of reality. They are "opaque emblems

of the disturbed world".<sup>28</sup> Their reality is not based on Herzog's standards of heart. Herzog cannot accept their reality, so feels more and more alienated. They represent the life that Herzog detests.

Among these 'reality-teachers', Simkin is one. He has a weakness for high-minded confused people like Herzog. To aggravate his tensions and insult him, he tells him the story of Mady's infidelity again and again.

Another 'reality-teacher' of Herzog is Sandor Himmelstein, the lawyer, who tortures him mentally. He finds Herzog weak with emotions, so reminds him Mady's bitch-like behavior from time to time. When Herzog talks about the possibility of having custody of his daughter, he tells him in a taunting and insulting manner, "Speaking as a lawyer, I can see you with a jury. They'll look at Madeleine, blooming and lovely, then you haggard' and grey-haired, and bam. There goes your custody suit. That's the jury system." (p. 89). He asks Herzog to face the facts, though they are nasty, but Herzog is unable to do so, that he knows. He is not receptive to the reality of the men around him. Further, he teases Herzog, ironically advising him not to be a clown. He deepens the sufferings of Herzog by saying: "when you suffer, you really suffer. You're a real genuine old Jewish type that digs exactions." (p.90). Herzog cannot bear such shocks with the dignity of the man that he once became bitter and bitterer. Angrily, he calls Mady a 'bitch', 'whore', 'psychopath, and Valentine a "moral megalomaniac" and 'cheat'. Herzog is not convinced by the 'Potato-love' which Sandor teaches him. Sandor also counsels him to avoid any slashes with Mady and Valentine.

According to Sandor, Herzog cannot win the custody - case for his daughter simply because he is grey-haired. Dr. Edvig, the psychiatrist also tells the side of Mady as he also finds her more attractive, beautiful, and young than Herzog. Herzog is fed up with these lectures of 'Reality-Instructors'. Surrounded by the people who want to control his actions and emotions, Herzog feels very much alienated, "Herzog is set-down among Reality - Instructor - people who positively enjoy thrusting forward the low-view of truth, cruel in their relish of the nastiness of life".<sup>29</sup> No one shares Herzog's ideas. He feels all alone. No one is there

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<sup>28</sup> Alfred Kazin, *Bright Book of Life* (New-York: Little Press, 1973), P.134.

<sup>29</sup> Tony Tanner, *Saul Bellow* (London & Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd Ltd., 1965), p.94.

to soothe him. Deceived by his wife and friend, teased and insulted by everybody, he quivers "because he cannot tolerate the pressures of Organization"<sup>30</sup> i.e. the pressures of existence.

Another great cause of Herzog's alienation is that he desires for traditional surroundings and high values. He upholds Jewish values and finds them lacking in this mechanized world. He desires family - feelings, moral concern for man, individual as an integral part of the society, belief in community, and open concern for man. He asks for a family in which there is "the husband- a beautiful soul- the exceptional wife, the angelic child, and the perfect friends..." (p.131). But these high feelings of family and love are missing in the society where he is living. So, he always goes back to his childhood world in memories. The childhood world gives him a sense of security. He cherishes the memory of his childhood friend Nachman. His nostalgic spirit finds communication with a dead sister easier than the living men in his society. About his thoughts of childhood memories, Rovit says, "These are not off-hand comments of a nostalgic sentimentalized in tranquility."<sup>31</sup> They have some meaning. Separation from childhood world where he had led a happy family- life once is at the root of his alienation. P. Shiv Kumar too emphasizes that Herzog: "appears to have acquired certain standards from his childhood experiences which have a great hold on his adult life."<sup>32</sup>

Mady had also once commented "You'll never get the surroundings you want. Those are in the twelfth century somewhere. Always crying for the old home and kitchen table with the oilcloth on it and your Latin book." (p.130).

He continues to search for those values which now belong to the past. In spite of all the bitter reminders to the contrary, he persistently holds on to them. Thus, Herzog is pitted against the very antithesis of his visionary world.

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<sup>30</sup> Irving Malin, Saul Bellow's Fiction (London & Amsterdam: Feffer & Simons, Inc., 1973), p.14.

<sup>31</sup> Earl Rovit, Saul Bellow (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1967) p.11.

<sup>32</sup> P. Shiv Kumar, Tablet Breakers in American Wilderness (Delhi: Seema Publishers, 1981), p.46.

In this state of illusion, Herzog cannot cope with reality as it is around. The reality around is totally different from what Herzog holds it to be. He wishes the world to change, but he is unable to change it. "He can't sit still, but he can't find the confidence in himself to make a move?"<sup>33</sup> He does not think he should change his own heart, but, instead, wants to change others' hearts. He cannot accept the world as it is, nor can he reshape it. His condition can be described as a condition of romantic ineffectuality. He feels helpless and so grumbles.

At this stage, we find that he is losing his subjective convictions, too. He has no faith in his friends and well-wishers. Rather, he is not in a proper condition of mind to distinguish between enemies and friends. One of these friends is Ramona. But he suspects her intentions, her love for him. He becomes skeptical of the truth when he runs away from Ramona thinking that she wants to control his soul. We find that Ramona has sympathy for him but he is not communicative even here. He is out off from her and even while waiting for her to appear in bed with him, he thinks of Rousseau, Kant, and Hegel instead of Ramona. In this situation, he goes to Martha's Vineyard to remain with another friend of his, Libbie Sisler.

Herzog goes to Libbie in the Vineyard. She and her husband both are nice to him. They welcome him heartily. But Herzog cannot stand the goodness of these people. He runs away from them thinking that, "Vineyard Haven was not place for him. It was lovely..." (p.99). He returns to New York without even informing the couple.

Now, Herzog is completely a prisoner of himself, uncommitted to friends and disconnected from society and the outside world. He finds that the world is out of joint as it is in sharp contrast with his inherited values and adopted ambitions. He can do nothing except brood over this. He cannot change the world according to his standards of values. Indeed, the sense of contrast is staggering for him. He only thinks and all possible action is consumed in little action in the novel.

"The significant action mainly takes part in his head. People and

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<sup>33</sup> Gabbriel Josipovici, ed., *The Portable: Saul Bellow* (New-York: The Viking Press, 1974), p.8.

incidents team through his memory precipitating great bouts of agitated soul searching and pounding speculation."<sup>34</sup>

He is not communicating his ideas. Tony Tanner quotes that on account of alienation and lack of communication with others "the number of intelligent people, whose vital conversation is with themselves, is growing."<sup>35</sup> Tommy, the protagonist of *Seize the Day* also suffers from the same dilemma. He says "you had a talk with yourself in day time and reason yourself at night."<sup>36</sup> When Herzog does not communicate, his mind is overburdened.

This condition leads him to the disintegration of the self. Herzog becomes abnormal in behavior. He aches and weeps like suffering joker. He now, in moments of fitful excitement, decides to assert his individuality and take revenge on his deceivers. But instead of hitting his enemies directly, he begins to tell the world about the immoral act of his wife and his friend. He now tells the story of his woes to anyone who will listen to him. He has a full catalogs of complaints against others, which he pins on his chest to show everyone. "Like an addict struggling to kick the habit, he would tell again how he was swindled, conned, manipulated, his savings taken, driven into debt, his trust betrayed by his wife, friend and physician." So, he does not suffer in silence. In his state of suffering, he becomes loud and lousy. Geismez calls Herzog a "wailing infant".<sup>37</sup> Herzog now is completely deluded. He still feels he is okay but that the world is on the wrong side. He projects the whole guilt on Mady and Valentine and others. In this effort to assert his individuality, he starts self—dramatizing and behaves like a suffering joker.

To assert his wisdom and individuality, Herzog starts writing letters. He writes continuously to all, dead and alive, Presidents and Bishops, friends, wives and beloveds, thinkers and philosophers, politicians, and statesmen. He is interested in creating his own world through these

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<sup>34</sup> Saul Bellow, p.88.

<sup>35</sup> Saul Bellow, p.108.

<sup>36</sup> Saul Bellow, *Seize the Day* (1957; rpt., Middlesex: Penguins Books Ltd., 1977), p.90.

<sup>37</sup> Quoted in John Jacob Clayton, Saul Bellow: In Defense of Man (Indiana: Indiana Univ. Press, 1968), p.192

letters. He makes fun of the great thinkers.

He quarrels with Prof. Heidegger and satirizes him for his expression "the fall into the quotidian." He asks Heidegger ironically: "when did this fall occur? Where were we standing when it happened?" (p. 55).

He wrestles with Nietzsche by writing a letter to him: "My dear, May I ask a question from the floor? You speak of the power of the Dionysian spirit to endure the sight of the terrible... Humankind lives mainly upon perverted ideas. Perverted, your ideas are no better than those of the Christianity you condemn and wish you happiness, whenever you are." (p. 326.2)

Herzog considers historical generalizations of the sort made by Heidegger and others defective because their subject is "the whole life of mankind." The subject, he finds "too great, too deep for such cowardice - too deep, too great." (p.81)

He criticizes Marx and Hegel for their attempts to destroy history with a view to finding one ideal situation for mankind, "which they believe is the only true and human reality". (p.306). These letters of Herzog are attached of Herzog on the concepts of objective reality as others see it. He is over-jealous to seize and capture reality but the effort remains largely vainglorious. He never posts his letters. This makes him more unreal and distant from reality. He becomes more and more alienated.

Herzog in his letters covertly and overtly indulges only in language-game. His intellectual bombardment makes him feel that he is an active and competent intellectual. But all those intellectual abstractions which he vomits and all his intellectual puffing simply create more and more confusion and he becomes a paranoiac. While writing letters, he is more confined to himself. Tony Tanner rightly points out that "all these letters simply serve to emphasize Herzog's silence, his basic isolation and apartness and indrawn ness."<sup>38</sup> Kulshrestha points out that "Herzog's letters are a part of his "curious project of attempted communication (p.162). They show him acting out the roles of son, brother, lover, ex-husband, son-in-law, relative, friend, patient, host, writer, professor, intellectual, observer, property owner, client, childhood friend, playmate,

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<sup>38</sup> Saul Bellow, pp. 95-96.

and cadet."<sup>39</sup> He is occupied with this business and does not go to the real society. So, he becomes more and more alienated.

Thus the cause of Herzog's alienation lies in his own personality or mind. He has plunged into the whirlpool of existence, but, paradoxically and characteristically, he himself is responsible for the stance of an outsider in the society, without having the wisdom of detachment. He becomes a Masochist by aggravating his sufferings. He thinks that he has been ruined by others. He never realizes his own faults. He finds Mady a beautiful bitch who spoiled his whole life, and Valentina a cheat. To Dr. Edvig, he says "You turn out to be a crook too. How pathetic!"(p.59). His tone is very ironic when he broods over the philosophy of Martin Rube: and applies it to Valentine. In one of his letters, he says tauntingly of Valentine: "And men come and go in each other's souls. Sometimes they come and go in each other's beds too. You have a dialogue with a man. You have intercourse with his wife. You hold the poor fellow's hand. You look into his eyes. You give him consolation. All the while you rearrange his life... You deprive him of his daughter." (p.70).

Herzog turns completely egocentric. He is in a state of self-delusion. He has no awareness of his own faults. Though he has been deceived by others and been flogged like a ball by others, Herzog is not free from weaknesses. He too is guilty and responsible for his condition. He is never aware of those weaknesses which others point out. Zelda tells him that he is "overbearing, gloomy" and he "broods a lot." Moreover, says she, he is "very demanding". We know that he has always been that. He behaved like a dictator when he was living with Mady. He was not communicative. He always remained aloof, involved in his thoughts, looking at the garden, when Shapiro came to visit them. Once he made love to Mady on the bathroom ground just to assert his individuality and egoism.

This first stage of Herzog is that of illusion instead of the understanding of reality; of self-delusion instead of self-awareness. This is his stage of childish ineffective impatience instead of a balanced mind. He cannot wait to see the things with his own eyes. He even surrenders all his sense of judgment. Therefore, he believes others at once. He receives a letter

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<sup>39</sup> C. Kulshrestha, Saul Bellow: The Problem of Affirmation. p. 116

from Geraldine Porthoy in which she tells him about the maltreatment that his daughter gets from Mady and Valentine. Herzog reads the letter and is very furious. He goes to the courtroom to consult a lawyer about this. There he witnesses a criminal case in which a couple is involved in murdering a child. This child is the son of that very woman by her previous husband. Herzog sees the image of Junie, his daughter in the dead child. He has just read the letter about the maltreatment that his child was suffering. Now he looks at the faces of Mady and Valentine in the murderers. This association without appreciation deprives the patience of his mind. He rushes towards Chicago, in order to kill Madeleine and Valentine.

This state of madness and suffering closes the first stage of Herzog's delusion. This is the end of his life in New York.

### **THE SECOND STAGE:**

In Chicago, we meet Herzog in a process of change. Here starts his second stage, that of awareness and knowledge. He now realizes his own mistakes too and shows positive qualities of mind. He finds that reality outside is not as bad as he once thought it was. This positive knowledge of reality is the consequence of his patience. This realization prompts him to positive action and he is no more passive than he was in the first stage.

In Chicago, first of all Herzog goes to his father's house to collect his father's pistol as he has come here to kill Valentine and Mady. He feels that he has got the opportunity to murder and revenge with a clear conscience. "They had opened the way to justifiable murder. They deserved to die "(p.262), as they treated the child in an inhuman way. After taking the pistol, he goes to Harper Avenue. He looks at the house of Mady and finds inside Valentine giving bath to Junie, lovingly. He now realizes that Valentine and Mady are not the cruel murderers of his daughter, but are her loving guardians. This discovery of the reality is beginning of his patience. He now, can wait to see the things for himself, while previously he had only believed others. And when he knows about the reality of Mady and Valentine': relations with his daughter he gives up the idea of killing them "So his intended violence turned into something ludicrous". (p. 265). Now, Herzog is examining and comprehending things on his own. He is active now and his mind is

coming into play.

The remedy he now seeks is not that of revenge and murder. He now seeks legal help. He first goes to Phoebe, Valentine's wife, as he wants to file a case against Mady and Valentine to have custody of his daughter and wants Phoebe's help in that. He tries to excite her against her husband. But Phoebe remains indifferent to him. She does not appreciate his ideas. But even after failing to get Phoebe's help, while he departs, "there was a softer kindliness in Herzog's expression, not often seem" (p.272). He kisses Phoebe on her head and also realizes that it was an unnecessary visit.

"It is one of Herzog's first displays of spontaneous affection for another person,"<sup>40</sup> says Clayton. This shows a positive change in the psychology of Herzog. He is now on the road to acceptance and affirmation. He is no more deluded. He understands people and is prepared to discover the reality for himself.

Apart from discovering the reality for himself, we find that he is growing morally sensitive. When he meets Luke Asphalter, he is a changed Herzog:

If once he ran from his friends at the Vineyard,  
unable to stand kindness, now he welcomes it.<sup>41</sup>

For the first time, instead of self-dramatizing and telling his woes, he enquires about Luke's pet monkey and consoles him at the death of the monkey. "Don't feel so bad, Luke" says Herzog. This shows that Herzog has grown communicative besides being morally sensitive. Now he is ready to visit his daughter June, to give her love, and is not outraged about Gersbach, he tells Luke.

Herzog has now developed a positive vision of life. He expresses disgust for those writers who have given the world, theories of fear and death. He now believes in the brotherhood of man, while previously, he had tried to create his own separate world through letters. This is clear from a very crucial moral message which he gives to Luke Asphalter: "I really believe

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<sup>40</sup> Saul Bellow: In Defense of Man, p.220

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid*, p.220.

that brotherhood is what makes a man human". (p.280). He gives a new gospel of moral and social truth saying, " Man lived not by self alone but in his brother's face." (p.280). He is now talking, to others and expressing the ideas which are important to him. He feels no more unhappy or alienated.

Herzog now develops a sense of discrimination. He knows where he is wanted and where he is not. This also involves a sense of propriety and courtesy in affirmation of the moral sensitivity he now exhibits. This is clear from his behavior at the court which he has to visit as if accidentally; Luke arranges a meeting between Herzog and his daughter. While taking Junie with him in a car, Herzog is involved in an accident. He is captured by the police as he is still having the pistol with him. He is taken to court for inquiry about his details. Mady too is called there. We find here that Herzog has gained practical wisdom too. After his meeting with Mady in the courtroom, he withdraws himself from the scene where he is not wanted saying: "I withdraw from the whole scene as soon as I can. Good-bye to all". (p.306). Here, ends his obsession with Mady and Valentine. It appears that he now cheerfully surrenders the object of his love, Mady, who earlier maddened him with infatuation, breakdown, and revenge.

This resignation of Herzog is different from his previous resignation of suffering. Previously, he had resigned himself from the whole world and imprisoned himself in his own world, but now he resigns from those places where he is unwanted. He is no more sticking to Mady as he finds in her eyes:

a total will that he should die. This was infinitely more than ordinary hatred. It was a vote for his non-existence. (p. 308).

So, he withdraws and is no bitterer. This too is a positive quality that has developed in Chicago. Now, knowledge comes to him, as he is ready to meet the world and express himself in a straight and reasonable manner. He is no more ironic as he was previously. He now lives in reality and is not an illusion.

Thus in his second stage, at Chicago Herzog develops many positive qualities. He is aware of his stance now. He is morally sensitive to others. He expresses and communicates his ideas to others and listens to others'

sufferings and consoles others. His tone is no more bitter or ironical now. He is no more displaying his intellectuality. He now believes in the brotherhood of man,

### **THE THIRD STAGE:**

From Chicago, he returns to Ludeyville, his country place. There starts the third stage of his moral and philosophical growth-- acceptance. He develops the spirit of self-examination now. He now gets rid of his self-imposed burdens. He gives up every activity of which he was once proud. He confesses now all those guilts which had he once tried to hide. He admits that: "he had been a bad husband- twice. Daisy, his first wife, he had treated miserably. Madeleine, his second wife had tried to do him in. To his son and daughter, he was a loving but bad father. To his own parents, he had been an ungrateful child. To his country, an indifferent citizen. To his brothers and sisters, affectionate but remote. With his friends an egoist. With love, lazy. With brightness, dull, with power, passive. With his own soul, evasive." (pp. 10-11).

Herzog's true self now makes him conscious of his shortcomings. His lustful choice for Mady, on account of which he experiences so much suffering, makes him realize that "there was a flavor of subjugation in his love for Madeleine." (p.14). He also finds his great project of letter-writing a futile play-acting: He knew his scribbling, his letter- writing, was ridiculous. It was involuntary. His eccentricities had him in their power". (p. 17).

His self-expansion continues. He is now identified with nature. He is living in the lap of nature, sharing his food with rats. He is sympathizing even with birds. "Indeed, he found owls in his bedroom... he gave them every opportunity to escape, and, when they were gone, looked for a nest." (p. 319).

He feels tranquility as he looks at the garden's green darkness and loves to think about the power of the sun, about light and the ocean. The purity of nature moves him to deeper subtleties and he praises God.

Herzog now finds that his great individualism had been a great enemy of his true self. "This little demon was impregnated with modern ideas, and one in particular excited his terrible little heart: you must sacrifice your poor, squawking, niggardly individuality- which may be nothing anyway

(from an analytic viewpoint) but persistent infantile megalomania.” (p.99).

He now realizes that to feed your ego and individuality is an obstacle in the way of easy living what he now mainly accepts is himself as "simply a human being, more or less". (p.317)

There is also a change in Herzog from subjectivity to objectivity. He now realizes that subjectivism is a monstrosity and this "subjective monstrosity must be overcome, must be corrected by the community, by useful duty." (p.227). He believes in society now." Like Henderson The Rain King this novel ends with the promise of accommodation to society "<sup>42</sup> says Clayton. Herzog now believes in his friends and welcomes them.

In Ludeyville, Herzog is in a mood of affirmation. He is on a way to accomplishing a partial re-integration of his battered self. He, now, finds himself free from Madeleine too. He has no complaints against Valentine and Mady. He accepts their union: “And you, Gersbach, you're welcome to Madeleine. Enjoy her— rejoice in her.” (p. 325).

He accepts the fate of a 'Visitory father'. He decides to go to see Marco, his son, at his camp. He feels relaxed and rejoiced: He feels a strange joy, relaxed and liberated, not only from Madeleine but from excessive exhausting egotism, the curse of unending thought, and the compulsive desire to explain everything.<sup>43</sup>

The renunciation of explanation is a transmutation of the self, and along with that change, the objective world as well changes its nature. He is transformed now. He is no more compelled by himself to explain or to justify everything as he was in his first stage. So, he is not loud and lousy but calm and quiet. From the life of an intellectual, always occupied with words and ideas, Herzog gives himself up to live with nature and its objects. He has ceased to feel proud of his intellectuality which has led him through a nightmarish reality. He now correctly views the difference between the heart and the intellect as he says that “the human intellect is one of the great forces of the universe. The soul requires intensity.” (p.

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<sup>42</sup> Saul Bellow: In Defense of Man, p.227.

<sup>43</sup> Tony Tanner, Saul Bellow, p.100.

318).

But the intellect is to be used for the intensity of the soul and not for the stubbornness of ego.

Herzog is on the road from alienation to affirmation, from escape to acceptance. Here is the change in him from self—dramatization to acceptance. He writes a letter to Ramona, in which he tells something very significant: “the light of truth is never far away and no human being is too corrupt and negligible to come into it... (After all, we have no positive knowledge of that void).” (p. 321).

He, now, realizes the human limitations and the importance of positive knowledge that he has gained and after which he has been hankering. Now he is spreading this message of life and human goodwill to others like Ramona. He is now rejecting all void-centered theories of risks and suffering. He also warns scholars against falling in love with suffering.

From violence, Herzog comes to reason, and from there he comes to heart and its feelings. He now feels more strongly than thinking about others. In one of his letters to Nietzsche, he had “felt a deep, dizzy desire to begin”. (p. 321). He actually begins now in Ludeyville. Tony Tanner has described beautifully the situation of Herzog in Ludeyville: “The last scene of the book leaves Herzog, stretched on a coach, for the first time experiencing a true pervading quiet after the remorseless inner clamouring.”<sup>44</sup>

Tony Tanner has also found the book ending with Herzog arriving at what he calls "a state of total inertia (Stasis)"<sup>45</sup> But it seems that the critic has misinterpreted here. We find that Herzog is not in a state of inertia when the book ends. He is active. He is waiting for Ramona, his ex-mistress, as he has written a letter of invitation to her- the first sent message of the novel. He also orders his maid to clean the house. So he is not in a state of stasis.

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<sup>44</sup> Saul Bellow, p.101.

<sup>45</sup> Tony Tanner, City of words: American Fiction-1950-70 (New-York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1970), 30

The invitation of Herzog to Ramona shows that he is now a social being. Clayton has found a change in Herzog's language, too. "Leaving a sterile intellectuality, Herzog speaks simply and without irony. The sentence becomes shorter, less complex in structure."<sup>46</sup>

There was a time when Herzog was weeping and crying loud and lousy, telling the story of his sufferings, but he is completely peaceful and quiet now. He has no message for anyone now, "not a single word." (p.348). Kulshrestha has rightly put him in the category of survivors<sup>47</sup> as he survives. Clayton also calls Herzog a "Representative Man fighting for survival."<sup>48</sup>

Thus, the book is about the growth of moral awareness and spiritual awakening in Herzog. The fault was with the mind of the protagonist and when his mind is right, the world is right for him. He is through with the crisis of alienation, apocalypse, and desperation. This is the journey of Herzog, from his alienation to affirmation. His alienation had started from New York and he completes his journey to affirmation in Ludeyville.

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<sup>46</sup> Saul Bellow: In Defense of Man, p.229

<sup>47</sup> Saul Bellow: The Problem of Affirmation, p.114

<sup>48</sup> Saul Bellow: In Defense of Mar, p.206

## **CHAPTER-III**

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### ***MR. SAMMLER'S PLANET: NO WHERE TO GO FROM HERE.***

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In Mr. Sammler's Planet, the problem of alienation is presented through Sammler, the protagonist of the novel. He is placed in the midst of all major events. Through all those events, he is constantly thinking about life.

Sammler is a Polish Jew, a survivor of the Nazi holocaust. He is more than seventy in age. Sammler has lost his wife and his one eye, too, in the war. In New York, he is financially supported by Dr. Elya Gruner, his nephew. As the novel opens, we find that Sammler is fed up with explanations. He finds that in the modern world "Being right was largely a matter of explanations."<sup>49</sup> He is placed in a situation that has sharp contrast with his past, set values, and ambitions. Sammler's time of peace has been over since 1939. Sammler is mature and has already faced death and violence. He is not like Herzog who was "overcome by the need to explain, to have it out, to justify, to put in perspective, to clarify, to make amends."<sup>50</sup> Sammler knows that it is "time to be conscious." (p.5). So, he is aware of the reality in the very beginning of the novel. "It was not until the end does Herzog realizes the futility of "explanations"... But Sammler is aware of the uselessness of explanation from the beginning".<sup>51</sup> Like a detached spectator, he is looking at the horrors of modern civilization.

Guttman comment: "The larky, jaunty quality of the major works of Bellow's middle phase, the freestyle of Augie March, and any antics of Eugene Henderson -- these are replaced by the somber thought of an elderly man who has seen the world go into pieces once end would rather that it didn't happen a second time. Bellow's choice of, Cracow-born,

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<sup>49</sup> Saul Bellow, Mr. Sammler's Planet (England: Penguins Books Ltd., 1970), p.5. All subsequent page references are from this edition and enclosed in parenthesis.

<sup>50</sup> Saul Bellow, Herzog, p.8.

<sup>51</sup> P.Shiv Kumar, Tablet Breakers in American Wilderness (Delhi: Seema Publications, 1981), p.71.

Bloomsbury-mannered Artur Sammler is, in itself, extremely suggestive.”<sup>52</sup>

Sammler is alien to the society where he is living basically. His world of peace and glory ended in 1940, whose memory lurks again and again in his mind. His values, his religion, and his nationality are totally different from American society. Indeed at his age, America is so different from his set of values and expectations that is appropriate to call it a planet:

“His near death in the Nazi massacre, his loneliness, his race, his nationality, his intellect, and his age, all place him at a distance from this planet.”<sup>53</sup>

Keith Opdahl also emphasizes. So, he is living like a stranger here, feeling completely alienated. It is a sort of life capsule in a different world.

There are so many reasons which make Sammler silent, confined to himself, and completely alienated. He is surrounded by young men and women who are money-mongers, sex-mongers, and valueless. They talk constantly, never listening to the others. Sammler has to subject himself to their nonsense. He cannot communicate his ideas to them as they are never ready to listen. Among these, Margotte is one, about whom he says, "She couldn't bring himself to say what he thought... She seldom stopped to listen". p.14. Sammler is shocked to hear their views about sex and money. He finds himself unable to improve their ideas. Thus surrounded by these empty heads, who never try to listen to his views, Sammler feels isolated and alienated. He always thinks and contemplates but never speaks.

Sammler in the beginning is different from what Herzog was in the beginning. Herzog in his suffering was loud and lousy. He always told his stories of grief to people. Neither is Sammler like Henderson who behaved rashly, impatiently. He has a more refined consciousness and he is confined to his silent self completely, from the very beginning. So he is settled and behaves in a more rational way than Herzog and Henderson.

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<sup>52</sup> Allen Guttman, *The Jewish Writer in America: Assimilation and the Crisis of Identity* (New-Tor/El Oxford Univ. Press, 1971), p.218

<sup>53</sup> Keith Opdahl, "A Review of Mr. Sammler's Planet *Commonweal* (Feb.1970), p.535,

This is clear from his reactions to the people around him who present characters and situations which are contrary to his standards and thinking.

Among the people around Sammler, Angela is one. She is the daughter of Dr. Gruner. She knows no sexual bounds. She is a modern emancipated woman. Sammler hates her for being vile, for her whorish eyes and "micro-skirts" which she is wearing while her father is dying. She also represents the ignorance of her age. She sends money to defense-funds for black murderers to ease rapists, without realizing that it will encourage disorder and lawlessness in society.

“She represents the realism of the race, which is always pointing out that wisdom, beauty, glory, and courage in men are just vanities and her business is to beat down the man's legend about himself.” (p. 150).

She has no lasting relations with anyone. Wallace rightly comments that "Anyman is her lover." (p. 149). She has been fond of liking, probably loving Wharton Horriker but now she is concentrating on other men for the last two years. Sammler's disgust against such kind of an attitude is clear in his words:

"Fidelity, strict and literal was not Angela's dish."(p. 56).

Equally distracted is her brother, Wallace. He tries to be nearly everything- lawyer, mathematician, physicist, Ph. D, in behavioral Science, Pilot, alcoholic, homosexual, having interests fluctuating from gambling and baseball to ariel photography. His and Angela's relations with their father are based on monetary gains. They are worried more in the money of their father than about his life. Wallace is not the least shocked at the possibility of his father's death in a few seconds. Moreover, he is talking about football with the doctor, while his father is preparing to leave the world. Both sister and brother want Sammler to use his influence to get them the money of their father. They ask Gruner about the whereabouts of the money, thinking that by telling them this, he can bestow them and can show his confidence in them as if money was the only medium to express one's love. When their father Elya Gruner, does not reveal anything about money, Wallace furiously goes to search for it by himself. He tears off the water pipes, least concerned about the damage to the house. When Sammler asks him to give heed to the roofs of the house, he replies: "There's insurance. Don't worry about ceilings."

(p.192). This shows the complete bankruptcy of moral values. This environment of society, where money is valued over personal and family relations is alien to Semler. He does not feel at home here and feels alienated.

We find Angela exemplifying the money-based relations in society When she proves herself unable to understand the filial love of Sammler towards Elya, her father. She thinks that Sammler loves her father because he (her father) had been the caretaker of Sammler and his daughter. A product of this society such as Angela can never understand the love of an uncle for his nephew.

Sammler keeps high family feelings that are absent in society. He is very much upset to see that even children love their parents for money. He does not like this commercialization of relations. He becomes alienated from society which has no roots, no family feelings. He is unhappy to see that contemporary contacts are unsatisfactory.

Sammler finds that there is complete topsy turvidom of all values in society. Here people are "justifying idleness, silliness, shallowness, distemper, lust".(p.9). Sammler notes business-bent, aggressive, and emotionless people He also finds that criminal instincts hold sway in society. This is clear from his meeting with the Negro pick-pocket. Sammler observes this black man picking pockets in the bus. He goes to a public telephone booth to complain to the police but finds it smashed and being used as a urinal. This, to him, appears as a complete breakdown of values and discipline. Sammler tries to get the help of a policeman on duty but he does not pay heed to this complaint as he finds the crime too trivial to check. The Negro Pick-pocket is provoked by Sammler's constant observation of his crime. He does not want to be checked by anyone. When Sammler reports on him, he pursues him and when he finds a lonely place, he arrogantly unzips his own fly and forces him to look at his penis, without speaking a single word. Sammler is so much disgusted with this humiliating and savage act that he does not even like to talk to anyone about this. Sammler feels highly disgusted by this show of sexual madness. Ben Siegel offers his comments on this episode:

“What are Sammler and the reader to make of this? The choices are many: Black man confronting Jew, noble stage versus effete moralists; or

perhaps, as Sammler himself thinks, raw, lawless energy (Sexual ego) dismissing reason, decency, and discipline.”<sup>54</sup> Indeed, the Negro symbolizes the criminal strength and disorder threatening the order and law in society.

Feffer, a salesman of "interest" and a man of "American life to point the anarchy and breakdown" wants to take: “the photograph of the black in action so that he may sell it to a magazine later. But while doing so, he is engaged in a fight with him. Sammler asks Eisen to separate them but while doing so he hits the Negro so heavily that nearly kills him. Sammler feels that Eisen too displays animal strength and he intervenes to separate them, & is shocked by the behavior of Eisen.”

Sammler notes that a cult of individuality holds sway in society, which is characterized by “a fever of originality, distinction and interest”.<sup>55</sup> In fact, the cult of might and personal violence has been given respectability by such terms as 'originality', 'distinction', and 'interest' etc. all of which is nothing but aggressiveness in the name of the initiative. Man now enjoys unlimited freedom and the result is lawlessness and disorder. It is only recently as Sammler says:

“... in the last two centuries, the majority of people in civilized countries have claimed the privilege of being individuals. Formerly they were slave, peasant, laborer, and even artisan but no person. (p. 183). Sammler feels that man behaves in an uncertain manner, without even knowing how to use his freedom. Uncertain in his freedom man wallows in what he believes to be his humanity, the source of individuality-- tears, sex, anger, personality. He rejects all limits on desire, and having lost perspective is maddened by his failure to consume and be all. The result is excess, desperation; monstrosity.”<sup>56</sup>

The Nazi massacre symbolized this monstrosity. The American society confirms that what the Nazi society once was, the American society how

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<sup>54</sup> Ben Seigel, "Saul Bellow and Mr. Sammler: Absurd Seekers of High -lialities," Earl Rovit, ed., *Saul Bellow: A Collection of Critical Essays: Twentieth Century Views*. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J. Prentice Hall, Inc.1975), p.131.

<sup>55</sup> Bryant, *The Open Decision* (New-Yor14 The Free Press, 1970), p.134.

<sup>56</sup> Keith Opdahl, "Mr.Sammler's Planet", p.535.

is. The American Nazis died out, the American society lives on, and perhaps by choice too. Young men and women are seeking to be limitless. This is a new cult of self-realization- a self of ill-regulated and disorganized interests. Wallace, in his attempts to be everything: "is trying to find himself, trying to assert his financial and emotional independence, yet floundering miserably."<sup>57</sup>

Similarly, Angela is more enslaved than liberated by her free expression of sexuality.

Margotte, the widowed niece of Sammler, who talks endlessly, is obsessed with intellectual clichés and explanations while her hold on practical life is so poor that she cannot even "wash a tomato without getting her sleeves wet".(p.16).

Even Sammler's own daughter Shula is more of this valueless- world than that of her father's. She even steals the only manuscript of Dr. Govind Lal about the moon to help her father in his memoir on H.G. Wells. She is fascinated with her father's project and so does this undesirable act. But Sammler thinks that she is becoming contemporary lawless and in this respect is experiencing the age. She is unable to resist the power of money. She agrees to help Wallace in finding the money if he gives her a share. But when she found the money herself, her mind changes. She tells her father about the money and expresses the desire to keep it. But Sammler prevents her from saying that they are not thieves. Still, the fascination with money is so much for Shula that she cannot hand it over to others easily. She wants to play upon the feelings of their father saying to him that he should think what will happen to them if Elya dies. So the value of survival is more important to her than honesty. Sammler forbids her to keep the money a secret and orders her to tell it to the lawyer Mr. Widdick. She is not the least worried about what Elya would think if she keeps the money a secret. Money is more important to her than her relations with Elya.

Another character who confirms the breakdown of values is Eisen, the ex-husband of Shula, who is obsessed with art in the same way as Angela

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<sup>57</sup> S.B.Conen, Saul Bellow's Enigmatic Laughter, (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1974), P.4.

is obsessed with sex and freedom, and Wallace with individuality. But his success, in reality, is nothing more than the futility of the attempt of these two. He paints like “a little school girl learning to draw pretty people with cupid mouths and long eyelashes.” (p.53).

So these people work hopelessly.

Sammler tests the values of all these ambitions of the people around against the values he holds dear. He thinks that Margotte's obsession with intellectual abstractions and discussions, Shah's passion for the project on H. Wells, and Eisen's interest in art are no more than pathetic assertions of individuality. These people stand for shallowness. They are empty within, but they try to pose themselves as intelligent. They become mere derivatives. Sammler thinks that if one wants to be an individual it is a good idea to pursue. But people in modern society do not know even the right meaning of their aim. They have adopted the wrong ways. So, he cries unhappily: “In these poor forms? Dear God: with hair, with clothes, with drugs and cosmetics, with genitalia, with round trips through evil, monstrosity, and orgy, with even God approached through obscenities?” (p. 184).

Another experience of Sammler which shows the polluted civilization happens at Columbia University. When Sammler gives a lecture there, students hoot and jeer at him. A young student stands up and interrupting him, shouts in obscene language: “Why do you listen to this effete old shit? What has he got to tell you? His balls are dry. He's dead. He can't come.” (p. 36).

Sammler is shocked at this behavior of the young student. Kulshrestha is right in pointing out that “Sammler is not so much personally aggrieved as struck by the will of the young to offend”.<sup>58</sup>

Sammler now finds himself in a state of confusion. He is so much disgusted that he tries to withdraw from this chaotic world. But in that recoiling action, he finds more strain on his mind. Every individual in the society contributes towards his exhaustion, which finally overtakes him,

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<sup>58</sup> Saul Bellow: The Problem of Affirmation (New Delhi: Arnold Heinemann, 1978), p.134.

frequently, he has a stinking sensation. He finds the atmosphere in New York nauseating. He feels that his inner self has been suddenly thrown out of gear. He is burdened completely with a sense of alienation.

Here, we find that in judging others, Hammier becomes a cynic. He passes judgments, on modern living. He cannot accept the world as it is around, calmly. He becomes satirical. He becomes critical of everything like Herzog. He criticizes everyone except Elya, whom he likes because he holds the family's feelings which he himself cherishes. He finds the Negro a mad spirit and Eisen a "homicidal maniac" (p.236). He thinks of Shula, Wallace, Feffer, Eisen, and Angela too, and finds them crazy in different ways. He says that Angela and Wallace have "no dignity to start with". He views tauntingly of Margotte's attempts to seek another marriage partner. He finds all young men and women crazy for entertaining 'themselves with "Treasure hunts, flying circuses, comical thefts, medallions, wigs and saris, beards".(p.236). He finds the people in society impotent. He thinks that he is hanging: being and non-being, between /the state of fullness and plenitude of this world and the emptiness and nothingness of no world.<sup>59</sup>

Sometimes, we find him off balance while passing judgment on others. He thinks that "this glorious planet is being defiled and poisoned by the Wallaces and Feffers and Angeles so that life can no longer be possible here."<sup>60</sup>

At this stage of mind, Sammler is unable to understand that people behave in the way, as their society does. Wallace openly says to him: "It wouldn't be suitable for you, but when I say it does not make a difference. I'm a different generation. I never had any dignity to start with. A different set of givens together. No natural feeling of respect." (p.194)

Angela, too, laughs at him by pointing out his comments on her drops: "Now it's my clothes: Are you speaking for him or for my clothes?" (p. 241).

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<sup>59</sup> Bryant, The Open Decision, p. 367.

<sup>60</sup> P. Shiv.Kumar, Tablet Breakers in American Wilderness, p. 88.

Sammler is forced to say: "O yes, I know I may be out of order, with bad puritanical attitudes from sick past which have damaged civilization so much" (p.241). But even then he persists in his attitudes of disapproval and his privilege of passing judgments. Bitterness reflects from his thoughts.

This bitter attitude of Sammler makes him more and more alienated from others instead of attaching him to people. He is completely burdened with alienation and finds himself on the verge of disintegration.

All these disconcerting experiences remind him of what he had undergone in the past. He also had a traumatic experience. After surviving the Nazi mass burial, he roamed for some time with revenging partisans. He too killed a German soldier. Sammler again and again thinks about the time when the German asked him to spare him but he hasn't listen to him. Sammler thinks that at that time he had no God. Was this act of his was an act of bravery, revenge, or was this a repetition of inhuman violence? This question haunts his mind again and again. He desperately seeks to find an answer to this. In New York, he finds drug addicts, and perverts celebrating their obsessions openly. Ha looks at the prevailing violence. He finds now that his self will disintegrate and finds it hard to put up with the tangles of his soul. He receives shock after shock. When he closely observes the violence and madness in the society, he has once again to go through those terrific experiences which he had earlier undergone. He finds human beings living with disintegrated selves, acting like mad men as they were in the war and as they are in an advanced and scientific city like New York.

And now we find Sammler completely alienated. This alienation is leading to the disintegration of his self. But it is to be seen whether Sammler will lose himself or he will be able to maintain his balance. His mind is not free from the memories of traumatic experiences. As Cohen puts that Sammler is "relatively free from the tyranny of the body, he is not free from the tyranny of his mind...The nightmare from his past - the barbarism of the Nazis, the more recent specter of bloated corpses from the Israeli Six-Day War-consume his walking hours."<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Saul Bellows Enigmatic Laughter, p.180.

Still even under so much pressure, personal and social, Sammler remains sane. His disintegration is contained, it does not explode. He continues to pay allegiance to a world of his own, which is ordered and balanced. The inner traits of his personality do not aggravate his malady as they did in the case of Herzog.

Finally, the sense of alienation becomes a burden for him, as he tries to unburden himself of this. And then starts the affirmation. After a long process of thinking and brooding and passing bitter comments, Sammler now tries to understand the cause of evil. He now tries to know why people behave so abnormally and why they are so indifferent toward ethical values. Now, instead of exclamations and expressions of disappointment, etc., he starts to find out the real cause of the malady.

He finds that the main cause of modern man's inhuman behavior is his excessive individualism. People today suffer from a mania to be more than human. He finds Rumkowaski, an early example of "our modern individuality boom". (p.187). The Germans appointed him to head up their extermination, camp at Lodz. He was a failure as a man "a man with a bit to play, like so many modern individuals". (p.186). He behaved like "a mad Jewish king presiding over the den of half a million people." (p.188). He suffered as if poisoned by: "a destructive theatricality, the very motive that drove Herzog to plan on killing Madeleine and Gersbach... He killed people in a hideous comic game as an accent to his own Personality."<sup>62</sup>

Sammler feels that he did so only to assert his individuality. He finds people in modern society impotent basically. In order to hide this impotence, they assert their personality more loudly and wildly. Sammler tries to find out the solution to the problem. He hates "contrived individuality, bad pastiche, banality and the rest." (p.188). He maintains that individualism should extend truth. He himself says: "as a personal distinction, enchantment, glory, it is for me devoid of interest. I care for it only as an instrument for obtaining truth." (p. 188).

He does not like people becoming marvelous as Herzog tried to be. We also find here that Herzog also came very close to this evil of

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<sup>62</sup> Bryant, The Open Decision, p.365.

individualism, in his first stage of illusion. Sammler desires that relations between human beings should be fruitful. This is possible only when they are based on common feelings of love and respect not on money and self-interest. Such kind of a fruitful relationship exists between Sammler and Elya. Elya gives Sammler security in his old age and Sammler loves him even though he has weaknesses. He tells Angela that Elya is "touchy, boastful, he repeats himself. He's vain, grouchy, proud". (p.243).

But in spite of these weaknesses continues Sammler "he's done well and I admire him". (p.243).

Sammler now looks at the good qualities of Margotte too, while previously he had been a highly critical of her. He now thinks that she has also family feelings as she also calls Sammler a family man and loves her like her father.

Sammler's mind is now developing in a positive direction. He now desires that people in modern society should include some moral values in their lives. He wants that they should lead a life full of "feeling, outgoingness, expressiveness, kindness, heart"(p.243). Like Herzog and Henderson, he admits that the moral basis of human behavior if in spite of all human weaknesses is that one should be human towards others, should love them, and be kind to them. Sammler now gives up the pose of a bitter commentator and thinks positively. He wisely conceptualizes that the world is divided into two parts. One part of it is ordered into tradition and duty and the other is marked by violence, sexuality, and rebellion. He finds that there is a threat of disorder to the saner part of the world, as it is unable to assert itself. Now it seems that Sammler is aware of the relapse in his own case. At this point of awareness and realization, he feels his responsibility to speak, to assert his values. That is why he now tries to overcome the subjective monstrosity like Herzog also realized towards the end of the novel Herzog.

Sammler knows that limitation is a fact of human nature. He tells Wallace that man must have limits. He says that he does not want to ascend the mountain, as it has no ceiling. "I'd prefer the ocean bottom". (p.147) says Sammler as it has both ceiling and depth. He now asks people to behave reasonably. For strength, he turns his head to the sky and seeks his faith in God, who is still available to him. Sammler believes that even these

characters could perhaps be redeemed. He is hopeful now.

Sammler, now, has a genuine concern for others. One-eighth part of the novel is devoted to Sammler's conversation with Dr. Lal. Dr. Lal is the author of the book "The Future of Moon". This conversation in the novel is a testament of Sammler's affirmation. Dr. Lal has in his book forwarded the theory that life on this planet has become too heavy. The opening sentence of his manuscript is - "How long will this earth remain the only hope of man". He believes that the conquest of the moon is a rational necessity of man. But Sammler does not appreciate his ideas. He thinks that the modern memos' ambition to inhabit the moon is his extension of stupidity. He does not find going on the moon, rational. "If it were a rational matter, then it would be rational to have justice on this planet first."(p. 190).

He finds that in spite of the chaotic condition around the earth, it is still worth living on. He thinks that there is no better substitute for what the earth offers. Here we find that Sammler's ideas are similar to that of Robert Frost when he says, "Earth's the right place for love: I don't know where it's likely go better."<sup>63</sup>

Sammler still believes in the dignity of man. He perceives that the world is falling apart but he denies that it is the end. About these people who say that this is the end, he posts a question: "What did they know about the end? From personal experience, from the grave if I may say so". (p.244). Although he is faced with chaos and disintegration, he believes that the center can hold. He obstinately refuses to share the apocalyptic visions of the intellectuals. Thus hopelessness for Sammler means the death of man not of the earth. He believes that there is still such thing as a man- or there was. There are still human qualities.

Sammler observes that what we need is a change in the heart. Going to the moon will not change the heart, so we should live here. Running from the Earth will not solve the problems of man. When Wallace asks him whether he would like to go to the moon, he replies: "I am content to sit

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<sup>63</sup> Ian Hamilton, Ed. Robert Frost: Selected Poems (Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1977), p. 82.

here on the west side and watch and admire these gorgeous Faustian departures for other worlds". (p. 147).

We find that Sammler's tone is changed now. He is no more bitter or cynical than he was previously. Despite of his hyper-criticism of the ways of the younger generation, he thinks that the moral nature of man will triumph and that things might change. Of Angela, he assures her brother "he may come around". (p. 177). Thus he believes in the positive qualities of man. Although he is faced with chaos and disintegration, he believes that the center can hold. He obstinately refuses to share the apocalyptic visions of the intellectuals. This shows that he does not believe in nihilism. He keeps positive values.

Sammler at the end comes to the conclusion that only as long as there is no ethical life and every individual is stuck up in barbarism, suffering must be endured. He has learnt to accept the world as it is.

Thus, in Mr. Sammler's Planet, Bellow has illustrated successfully his purposes of art. Bellow has said that art "must be understood as a purgation of consciousness."<sup>64</sup> Sammler struggles and cleans his own mind of all cynicism and bitterness. Secondly, Bellow thinks that art "has something to do with the achievement of stillness in the midst of chaos."<sup>65</sup> He thinks that the writer should write for the defense of man. The change in Sammler's tone towards those characters that has gone astray is quite significant. He has accepted them now.

Thus, we find the quest of Sammler for survival and his struggle to redeem himself. Ultimately he achieves the wholeness of being and wisdom. The novel ends with a note of affirmation. The final impression that we gather is that Sammler will survive the dangers passed by the environment, just as earlier he survived the cruel monstrosity of Nazism.

The question of being and how a man should live is often raised in Bellow's novels. Bryan finds that Joseph, the protagonist of Bellow's first novel *Dangling Man* asks "How should a good man live.

What ought he to do?" and twenty-six years later, Bellow's protagonist,

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<sup>64</sup> "A Conversation with Saul Bellow", *Chicago Review*, Vol. 23, No.4 and Vol.24, No.1, p.11.

<sup>65</sup> C. Kulshrestha, *Saul Bellow: The Problem of Affirmation*, pp. 148-49.

grown to an old man in his seventies, a Jew who has miraculously escaped from death at the hands of Germans and virtually come back from the dead, a commentator on the human condition who has experienced that condition stripped of its adornments in the moment of death, answers: A good man ought to live by "feeling, outgoingness, expressiveness, kindness, heart."<sup>66</sup> Thus through Sammler, Bellow gives the answer to man's question of being (what) and how to overcome his alienation.

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<sup>66</sup> Bryant, The Open Decision, p.363.

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## CONCLUSION

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From a close study of the psychology of the protagonists of the novels of Saul Bellow, we find that they present a symbolic journey of the soul. Bellow explores the alienation of the individual in society. The main characters are shown as ill-adjusted and alienated. They find the environment contrary to their aspirations and beliefs. Unable to cope with objective reality, they reject the world and become subjective types. Getting withdrawn into their selves, they also brood over their own guilts too. In order to redeem themselves of those guilts, they become masochists. Escapism and masochism do not help them and their suffering is all the more aggravated. Their selves reach near disintegration.

In Saul Bellow, we find that the story of the alienation of the protagonist is not a description by the author, but it is a dramatic presentation of the self by the protagonist himself. The novel contains the mental journey of the protagonist and is an enactment of the simultaneous memory of the long past on the screen of mind. The protagonist himself narrates the story of his part. It is a kind of recollection of the mind in tranquility. Herzog in Ludeyville, lying on a couch in a mood calm thinks over his past and he is now sane enough to laugh at his own follies. Similarly, Henderson also thinks over his past and realizes that he misbehaved with Lily and was never responsible. Sammler also changes his attitude towards the end after knowing the weakness of his temperament.

Bellow's handling of the problem of alienation is very perceptive and comprehensive. He finds the sensitive individual caught up in the clutches of modern materialistic civilization. This civilization may encourage his selfish drives and flatter his vanity, but it undermines his moral strength and thus brings about an erosion of his humanity. He also offers a very intelligent critique of society which is engaged in destroying human dignity. So, he chooses characters who are aware of the disintegration of their selves. Bellow finds the efforts to suffocate the sensitive individual souls reflect in the deliberate mischief and cruelty around Sammler and Herzog represent that society. The pressure of the

social organization is so much that the protagonists shiver. They even find it hard to maintain their balance. Sometimes they even reach the point of insanity and behave like paranoiacs.

Along with society Bellow also shows the responsibility of the individual. He finds that man is equally responsible for his alienation and disintegration as he is burdened with his own ego. He finds his protagonists obsessed with the shortcomings of the people around them. But finally, they have to realize that something is wrong with them too. They ultimately realize that it is not up to them to change the world, they can only change themselves. They have also to accept the world as it is. When they accept the whole thing as it is, they realize the futility of their attempts to withdraw or to change the world. Herzog ultimately realizes that all his letter writing was futile play-acting and that he was controlled by his own ego. Similarly, Henderson comes home with a decision to be a better husband.

Bellow does not sentimentalize his heroes. He keeps an ironic distance from them. He exposes their egocentric behavior and centricities completely. He laughs at "Herzog' the suffering joker" and at Henderson who behaves in a childish manner and at Bawler who tries to withdraw from the world. Bellow believes in the brotherhood of man. When individuals withdraw into their selves, they suffer more. Man is a social animal, loneliness aggravates his sufferings. Man has his responsibilities towards other human beings also.

In this particular aspect of life- human relations and individual responsibility- Bellow differs from the socio-philosophical views of other thinkers. Such as Tennessee Williams who finds that the frustrating influences of society is so much on the individual that he has to perish. His protagonists are alienated souls, having no sense of belongingness. Georg Lukacs, says that for the writers, who write about the alienation of man, the dictum that man is a social being, does not exist. He observes that for them: "Man is by nature solitary, a-social, unable to enter into relationship with other human beings".<sup>67</sup>

Bellow's protagonists finally return to society. Herzog believes in the

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<sup>67</sup> Earl Rowit, Ed., Twentieth Century Views: A Collection of Critical Essays on Saul Bellow (Prentice Hall; Englewood Cliffs, N.J.1975), p. 16.

brotherhood of man and he finds that man should live in society. Sammler and Henderson also realize their duty to extend their love to other human beings. Bellow specifically expressed his commitment to the social ideal.

About the theme of Herzog, he said: "To me a significant theme of Herzog is the imprisonment of the individual in a shameful and impotent privacy."<sup>68</sup>

So, Bellow believes in the brotherhood of man. He wants to pull the man out of the cage which he has created for himself. He wants man to accept individual human limitations. He wants man to come out of his cage to a way beyond a world of higher activities of the mind which can help him to wade through the tumultuous zone in which he is located today.

Another noticeable point in Bellow's novels is that his protagonists are not static personalities. They do not, like William's characters end where they had begun. Their minds go on changing and developing in a positive direction. They move from alienation to affirmation.

Essential and existential sufferings mark the substance of Bellow's novels. In these three novels also we find that all the protagonists suffer. But their sufferings are different from one another's. Henderson, the protagonist of Henderson's *The Rain King*, suffers from Romantic suffering. He is always hearing a voice from his inner self which says: "I want, I want".

This voice is symbolic of his unquenched thirst. He is not satisfied with the fate of an ordinary man and wants to be extraordinary. In the search for fulfillment, he goes to Africa. The inner and outer traits of his personality are fully exposed there. In an attempt to prove his individuality, Henderson has to suffer. Finally, he has to realize the fact of individual human weakness.

Similarly, Herzog, the protagonist of *Herzog* tries to be "marvelous". He wants to change the world according to his personal standards. He tries to explain and justify everything. He fails as he refuses to accept human

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<sup>68</sup> Earl Rowit, Ed., *Twentieth Century Views: A Collection of Critical Essays on Saul Bellow* (Prentice Hall; Englewood Cliffs, N.J.1975), p. 16.

limitations. Under the pressures of materialistic civilization, he suffers existential suffering. He thinks that he has fallen upon the thorns of life and finds himself bleeding. His self disintegrates and he becomes a suffering joker. But he also has to realize the futility of his attempts to explain and change everything.

Sammler, the protagonist of *Mr. Sammler's Planet* also suffers. His suffering is neither romantic nor existential but reflective. He looks at the world from a distance. He also does not appreciate the modern world, 'neither is he ready to accept the way the world is going. He knows that he cannot change it. He passes bitter judgments on modern living, thinking of himself as superior to others. He wants to withdraw from the world which, he finds chaotic. But the idea does not help him. His suffering is rather aggravated. He too realizes, ultimately, that until there is ethical life, one has to endure all stupidity and barbarism of the world. So Sammler comes to the conclusion that it is better to accept the situation.

So, we find that the individual suffers when his views clash with others. The different sorts of outcomes of the clash between the individual and the environment will be different in the case of different kinds of art: compromise as in a comedy, self-extinction as in a tragedy, and affirmation as in the novels of Bellow. In Saul Bellow, the sufferings of the heroes lead to their self-realization and the result is acceptance. They are reaffirmed as they accept the world and themselves. Escape from the world and masochism do not help. In the case of Bellow, the affirmation is not of the nature of a compromise of values, but of a discovery or rediscovery of values. Nor is it the surrender of the will to the environment. It is of the nature of the fulfillment of a higher, i.e., socialized will, a discovery or rediscovery of the environment.

We find that alienation for Bellow is a disease of the mind of the protagonists. Because alienation is a disease, the protagonists recover, and at the end of their journey, they are calm and quiet. It is the mind that changes, not the society. When they clean their minds of the ego and excessive individuality, they look at the existence and goodness of others around them. When they realize this, they find the world acceptable. They talk about love and God and the higher values of life when they are reaffirmed. Henderson speaks of God because in faith only he discovers

positivity in the world. Herzog prays to God to be cured of the egoism that has brought him to ruin. Sammler also speaks of God who, according to him, can save man from the maladies with which he is afflicted today.

Finally, we can say with Tony Tanner that in Bellow's novels we find: "a joyous sanity growing out of the neurotic exhaustion. No new meanings, no new solutions; rather a change of heart, a turning to the sun."<sup>69</sup>

So life is all a matter of the change of heart or mind.

Bellow's attitude to the place of the individual in society and the individual's creative responsibility to himself and his social world is especially relevant to the study of the literature of the western world in India. Not only in India but all over the world, so far as critical thinking is concerned, the strictly formalistic attitude to literature is changing. We are shifting to an appreciation of the social value of literature. In this context a positive attitude of affirmation on the part of the individual and his realization of responsibility to society and himself are valuable.

Take, for example, the view such as Northrop Frye's that while criticism should give us a synoptic vision of literature, literature should give us a synoptic vision of life. This attitude is nothing new because the moral and philosophical strain in literary criticism has persisted from the days of the early Greeks to the present day. But it is especially imperative in the context of modern life. If alienation is played up so that the responsibility of negating life shifts from the individual to the system, then the meaning and message of literature as a medium of communication would become suicidal. We are passing through an age where society and the system - is being dubbed as a villain. We do not appreciate self-contradictions in our attitudes to this view of the individual and society. Each one accepts that he is an individual and therefore a victim of the system. But not many realize that each one is a member of society for the other individual and thus each one is responsible for the frustration of others. We need a change of heart and direction.

If we do realize the need for change, where does the change start? Bellow's attitude is clear and positive; it has to start with the individual. According to him, each one is responsible for himself, to himself, and to

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<sup>69</sup> Tony Tanner, Saul Bellow, p. 101.

society. He must change himself and come to a vision of society which will then change through the individual. This attitude of individual responsibility and creativity is of special relevance to developing countries where the individual is suffering and struggling but the system is not so developed as to ensure for him all those facilities and opportunities which the western society does. Probably, Bellow's strict religious discipline explains his commitment to the individual's own responsibility. Without stating, explicitly, the Jewish idea of justice and responsibility, he underscores the fact that the individual is responsible for his own problems and sufferings and he must work out his own way to salvation. If the individual does not do that, the only result is self-extinction. Bellow does not accept extinction. Instead, he insists on responsibility and creativity, and through a psychological vision of that creativity, he presents a convincing picture of a positive world wherein man is capable of his own salvation.

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## *About the Author*



Dr. Ekta Sharma has been teaching English in various colleges in Haryana since 2006. She holds M.A., M.Phil., and B.Ed. and has qualified UGC NET examination. She is a Ph.D. from M.D. University, Rohtak. She has attended many seminars /workshops/ conferences at national and international levels. She has also presented a research paper at the world's prestigious Harvard University, Boston, USA. She has many publications to her credit. She is also a member of the Editorial Board of the English Language, literature and culture journal (ISSN: 2575-2367)

Acceptance/ Affirmation is a person's realization and recognition of the reality of his surroundings. This is also an effort towards disambiguation with no intention to change the situation according to one's own whims. Like Saul Bellow's Herzog says, "If I am out of my mind it's all right with me." But it is a long and difficult journey for humans to reach this stage who think they are entrapped in a hostile environment. This journey from alienation to acceptance is vital in Bellow's novels. As this is a universal dilemma, it motivated me to write this book.

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