CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION

Now there are times when a whole generation is caught… between two ages, two modes of life, with the consequence that it loses all power to understand itself and has no standards, no security, no simple acquiescence – Herman Hesse, *Steppenwolf*.

The twentieth century was an era of upheavals. The First World War resulted in an end to the old order. It was a staggering blow to Western civilization, which brought a radical change in every aspect of life. It shattered people’s belief in Enlightenment, ideas of progress, reason and the rights of the individual which had been the outcome of significant progress of the past two centuries. The world that people knew had been turned upside down. The new world, aftermath of the First World War, created an “age of anxiety”. Political crisis in the 1920s was followed by the Great Depression beginning in 1929 and the road to the Second World War in the 1930s. In the mid-20th century the ethical values of Judaism were severely attacked by Hitler and Nazi philosophy. The war against the Jews was a war against 20th century humanism. By aiming to annihilate the Jewish people, it also tried to eradicate humanism as a worldview. People’s faith in institutions was shattered, which in former times had given a sense of security. Due to these drastic changes in the old system and values, people started feeling fragmented, anxious and shattered, and without any constant relation either to history or the present. Anxiety was a pervasive phenomenon in the middle of the twentieth century. The perceptive citizen started becoming aware not only of the more obvious anxiety creating situations such as the threats of war, uncontrolled atom bomb, and of radical political and economic upheavals but also of the less obvious and deeper sources of anxiety namely the inner conflict, psychological perplexity and uncertainty with respect to values and acceptable standards of conduct. Anxiety was so widespread in society that it became the central problem in diverse fields such as poetry and
Many writers of the 20th century represented the chaotic and disintegrated world of post-war era. Everyone depicted different ways to meet the challenge of surviving the changing scenario when people were living under continued nuclear threat, destruction of the family and loss of faith in institutions which previously provided them security and an ordered society. Saul Bellow is one of the American writers who manifest the sense of insecurity, anxiety and bewilderment of the age after the Second World War. A Nobel Laureate of 1976, he is also the winner of three National Book Awards, two Guggenheim Fellowships and one Pulitzer Prize. In 1990, he received the National Book Foundation Medal for outstanding contribution to American letters. Like all writers of consequence he puts his stamp on reality in a style recognizably his own. Born in 1915 in Lachine, Canada, Saul Bellow was the fourth and the last child of Russian Jewish emigrants from St Petersburg. The family moved to Chicago in 1924, settling down on Division Street.

Bellow entered Tuley High School the year of the stock market crash. Tuley and Humboldt Park provided the setting for a peculiar social phenomenon in that period. The High School and the neighbourhood produced a remarkable number of scientists, mathematicians, and intellectuals of every sort. The arts predominated, however. In high school, being Yiddish wasn’t something Jewish people talked about in the neighbourhood- unless they wanted to get involved in a street brawl. After they got used to the idea of being Yiddish, Bellow and his friend Rosenfeld became accomplished Yiddishists in their own right. Although Saul Bellow has translated stories of Sholom Aleichem and Isaac Bashevis Singer into English, his most impressive accomplishments were the Yiddish translations of T. S. Eliot he used to improvise with Rosenfeld. The Tuley High school circle was precociously political. Most, including Bellow went on to the University of Chicago. “Everybody breathed, ate and read radical politics,” Bellow remembered. “It was understandable. The foreign intellectual press was radical; the most interesting American writers of the time were radical. And it
was our feeling that the American tradition was radical, too” (Cook 46-50). Eventually Bellow left the University of Chicago and transferred to Northwestern University. By the time he graduated from Northwestern University and had entered the University of Wisconsin; Bellow was firmly committed to the study of anthropology. Issac Rosenfeld followed him up to Madison as a graduate student in philosophy. The University granted Saul Bellow his Bachelor’s degree in anthropology in 1937. Eventually, Rosenfeld received his degree and left; Bellow simply left. A teacher of Bellow, Alexander Goldenweiser, inferring Bellow’s aptitude for literature suggested him to leave anthropology for literature.

A long, uncertain period followed: Bellow was in and out of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) Writers’ Project, an occasional student at Chicago, and for a while, an editor on the Encyclopaedia Britannica. Then, finally, the war came, and with it, the situation described in Saul Bellow’s Dangling Man. Bellow born in Canada and technically an alien, could not enlist, nor could he be drafted until he was properly investigated. And so he dangled, waiting for months and months to be called, waiting for the war to happen to him. It was a debilitating experience, but a beautiful central metaphor for the novel which came out of it.

These early influences – the chaos of Chicago, the suffering of Depression, the national faith in social reform - find expression in the cultural relevance of his work. Bellow came to Chicago in 1924. His mother, by that time, had been in North America for eleven years; but she never got used to it. Bellow comments in an interview with Cathleen Medwick, “She was thinking of her family in Riga all the time. And this was just a sort of exile, purgatory as far as she was concerned. It was very hard to bring up four children in so strange a place” (Medwick 192). From the beginning, Bellow alternatively felt like an insider and outsider:

Even though I went to grammar school and high school and
college in Chicago, lived in the streets and knew it so well. I felt there was a kind of exoticism about the place. I suppose part of the feeling came from my mother’s situation, to which as the youngest child I was very sensitive. (Medwick 192)

Bellow also might have felt the anxiety of being an outsider living in Chicago. Chicago with its gigantic outer life contained the problem of the inner life in America. In his work Bellow remains concerned with an individual’s life in mass existence and the consequent anxiety generated by it. In one of his interviews he comments, “So then what happens to the life of a person? It is as it were price cut into insignificance. Through this kind of swelling and irritation of the public sphere, the private sphere becomes insignificant” (Medwick 195). Bellow feels that by remaining preoccupied with their own lives people have formed subjective calluses. They are protected by their own existence. Rollo May also substantiates Bellow’s point by highlighting “individualistic competitive pattern” in modern times (Meaning of Anxiety 183). He maintains that anxiety arises out of interpersonal isolation and alienation from others. People respond to the sensational events but don’t really care about anyone. And this is the reason that the culture is being extinguished due to indifference and coldness towards everyone. Bellow points out the contradictory state of an individual’s condition in modern age:

We have fallen upon evil days, and the life of the individual is not at all thought to be important. There are two strains going through the history of the 20th century: one reaffirming the significance of the individual, the other that he doesn’t mean a damn thing… the totalitarian movements put down the value of the individual, trying to show that physically he was of no account, could be destroyed, could easily be converted to ashes…. (Robinson 74)
Karen Horney also draws attention to the same contradiction in individual’s life in modern competitiveness. He articulates this contradiction as between:

the alleged freedom of the individual and all his factual limitations. The individual is told by society that he is free, independent, can decide his life according to his own free will; ‘the great game of life’ is open to him, and he can get what he wants if he is efficient and energetic. In actual fact, for the majority of people all these possibilities are limited… The result for the individual is a wavering between a feeling of boundless power in determining his own fate and a feeling of entire helplessness. (*Neurotic Personality of our Time* 289)

Bellow’s hero’s main concern was to preserve his sense of individuality amidst myriad pressures. As Rollo May suggests “the kinds of threats which cue off anxiety are largely defined by the culture in which the individual lives” (*Meaning of Anxiety* 152). Bellow also might have absorbed theses anxiety creating experiences in culture of his times. Right from his childhood Bellow assimilated different kinds of influences. Talking about influence of different places on his life Bellow says:

My life in Canada was partly frontier, partly the Polish ghetto, partly the Middle Ages…I’ve always been among foreigners, and never considered myself a native of anything. My father was the same way. In Russia he imported Egyptian onions, in Quebec he bootlegged for American rumrunners, in Chicago he sold coal. I was brought up in a polyglot community by parents who spoke many languages. (Howard 80)

Critics and scholars also have traced many influences on Bellow’s fiction. He was influenced by European writers who, like Bellow, were concerned with social and personal disintegration, most notably the works of Dostoevsky, Sartre
and Camus. Bellow’s themes of freedom and the quest for identity ally him to the existentialist fictions of Sartre and Camus. And like existentialists Bellow also deals with the problem of anxiety in the modern world. Bellow’s early novels have much in common with the victimized and isolated figures of Kafka’s novels. Bellow’s Jewish heritage also gets reflected in his fiction, a history of persecution and a tradition of writing that found comedy within nightmare that it explored.

Tony Tanner relates Bellow to the relevant literary traditions i.e. Russian, Jewish and American. He observes that Bellow’s work represents “a coalescence of energies, a convergence of traditions-Russian, Jewish, American” (Tanner 2). In Bellow’s novels, the sense of the abiding human spirit as an essence in its own right which can take issue with the whole society can be obviously called a Russian influence.

The second influence on Bellow’s work has been that of Jewish writing. The combination of high and low, sublime and trivial in Jewish experience finds expression in Bellow’s fiction in which the commonplace matters and philosophy come together. Bellow’s characters, too, are shown to be a mixture of elevated and trifling qualities.

Alfred Kazin also emphasises the significance of Jewish experience in Bellow’s fiction, the anxiety felt by Jewish persons due to their marginal status in society and their inner conflict. The Jewish neighbourhood, the Jewish family circle, the Jew as radical, dreamer, explorer of low life repeatedly appear in Bellow’s fiction (Bright Book of Life 127-28). In the post-war period of atomisation, uprooting and universal alienation, the image of the Jew tends to become the image of everyone. Bellow’s Jew represents ‘everyman’ who feels displaced and rootless in the modern urban world (127-128).

Thirdly, Bellow’s writings represent American life with its immigrant experience and a life caught in vast urban complexes of modern America, very realistically. Bellow like many other American authors namely Walt Whitman,
Dreiser, Emerson, Melville and Henry James, deals with the problem of ambiguous relationship between the uncommitted self and society with its various demands for commitment and surrender.

Like many writers and intellectuals of his generation, Bellow also drew inspiration from psychology and was influenced by Freud, the genius of psychoanalysis. For him he expressed the inevitable love-hate. Bellow was genuinely involved with the process of psychoanalysis like other writers of his age. Yet, in his play ‘The Last Analysis’ Bellow presents a parody of psychoanalytical method. The basis of Bellow’s argument with Freud is manifested in his interviews. Bellow makes it clear that his main objection is regarding Freud’s concept of Unconscious taken by him to be a form of determinism. Freud manifests a view of man which is new, denuding, radically subjective and iconoclastic. Freud introduces determinism, the determinism of the unconscious mind. Freud said that character was essentially fixed at the age of six, that everything in character was essentially determined by that time. “In most cases” as Philip Rieff says, “Freud insists that character does not change deliberately, through taking thought or through decision; our character is, so to speak, changed for us, by returns from oblivion” (Freud: Mind of Moralist 131).

Though Bellow assimilates Freud’s ideas into his work to some extent, he opposes some of his concepts. As Daniel Fuchs says:

Bellow has learned from Freud but essentially opposes him. To say that Bellow knows Freud very well is no exaggeration. There was a period when Freud was his nightly bedtime reading and Bellow’s frequent references to Freud in his fictive works, his notebooks, and his essays reveal an easy intimacy not only with major works but also with minor ones. (‘Bellow and Freud” 27)

Bellow believes in the power of individual and his possibility of improvement but Freud denies man that power. Clara Thompson also substantiates Freud’s deterministic attitude by commenting, “Freud did not
envision people in terms of developing powers and as total personalities...He thought of them much more mechanistically-as victims of the search for the release of tension” (*Psychoanalysis* 53).

For Bellow, as for the revisionists, the root of the problem is the nature of Freudian unconscious. Bellow wants feeling without symbols whereas Freud could not do without symbols. Dreams are, for Freud, the language of determinism, the truth of a totally symbolic, amoral chaos of an unconscious. Bellow suspects that through symbolic interpretation, the unconscious can tyrannize over consciousness.

Freud’s writings on culture are more concerned with myth than with history. “For the very reason that Hegel thought Africa no proper subject for the historian, Freud thought it most proper,” says Rieff (*Freud* 215). Bellow’s Africa, on the other hand, is really an affirmation of traditional morality. And in much of his work Bellow is involved with historical reality as such. His time is chronological, not mythological.

Bellow and Freud have different attitude towards art and literature. Freud is uneasy with art. Otto Rank maintained that Freudian theory could not cope with the creative artist. In his essay, “Dostoevsky and Parricide” Freud says, “Unfortunately, before the problem of the creative artist, analysis must lay down its arms” (3). The reason behind this statement is that there is something about art that eludes the theory of unconscious determinism; there is something larger than Freud’s system. Bellow insists that there is an area of freedom that surpasses Freudian rationalism. Freud never grants art the independence the artist gives it. He sees imagination as a symptom of the unconscious. He gives more importance to criticism than art. He defines art as daydream, escape from reality, mild narcosis or “substitute gratification” for “the oldest cultural renunciations” (*Future of an Illusion* 3).

Sigmund Freud visited America in 1909. He and two disciples, Carl Jung and Sandor Ferenczi, had been invited to Worcester, Massachusetts, to celebrate
the twentieth anniversary of ambitious, unorthodox Clark University. Freud came to America at a “psychological moment”. Symptoms of crisis and change were becoming prominent in those aspects of American cultural and professional life that psychoanalysis touched most profoundly—sexual morality and the treatment of nervous and mental disorder. It was a period of intensified change when social roles and basic principles were being redefined. Rollo May in *Psychology and The Human Dilemma* also dwells on the importance of historical dimension of psychological problems (57). He believes that individual’s anxiety and his ways of meeting it are conditioned by the fact that he stands at a given point in history. He emphasises cultural and historical upheavals of 20th century and consequent insignificance of man and loss of identity due to changed circumstances. Anxiety was created in people because of their insignificance and lack of any substantial role in changed circumstances. The loss of the experience of one’s significance leads to the kind of anxiety Paul Tillich called the anxiety of meaninglessness or what Kierkegaard terms anxiety as the fear of nothingness (qtd. in May, *Psychology* 37).

Influenced by the proletarian novel, Bellow assumes a direct connection between art and society. He explores the place of the individual in a capitalistic society and the meaning of a vast population to the private life. Though Bellow is perceptive of the tremendous resilience and openness of American life, he is a pertinent critic of some of the dangers inherent in his own social milieu. He condemns the “vacuity and mindlessness” of many affluent Americans and feels that the basic human values such as love, duty and compassion are continuously being eclipsed by the new materialistic considerations. Individual’s self-worth depends upon his achieving competitive success. Abram Kardiner describes the problem this sets for modern man:

The anxieties of Western man are therefore concerned with success as a form of self-realization in the same way that salvation was in the middle ages…. It is a responsibility, and failure brings with it less social censure and contempt than it does self-contempt,
a feeling of inferiority and hopelessness. Success is a goal without a satiation point, and the desire for it, instead of abating, increases with achievement. The use made of success is largely power over others. (*Psychological Frontiers* 445)

Bellow affirms that society with its increasing materialism threatens to suffocate the soul with its abundance of things. He realizes that modern American life has become so sickening and repulsive that it has become almost impossible to preserve the old uncommitted independence of the self in a world which is dominated by freakish oppressive determinism. But he neither surrenders to the contemporary world completely nor does he renounce it absolutely. Bellow is aware of the tensions of modern selfhood and the crisis of history. He presents the individual, in his novels, who is full of anxiety due to the power of insanity of the modern world, the unusual historical and psychological pressures against which selfhood must be won. He writes about the world of survivors after the Holocaust, the world where human beings are dwarfed by the cities they live in, by the power of science and new cosmos.

Bellow’s novels offer a distinguishing vision of modern America in an Age of confidence and superabundance:

> They are filled with great American *spectacles*: the rise of the shock-city Chicago; the incorporation of ghetto experience into the post-war mainstream life of super-rich America; the guilt of the survivor, never able to grow free of the horror of the Holocaust and the phenomenon of anti-Semitism, careless cultural accumulation and grand historical certainty. (Bradbury ix)

Bellow’s fiction deals with quite a new kind of age: a time of fast-growing American enterprises of post-modern boom, creating a kind of psychic futurism and what Jean Baudrillard calls the modern hyper-reality.

Besides Bellow there were other contemporary writers who wrote about the dilemmas of the new age and the resulting anxiety in people. Writers like Bernard Malamud, Philip Roth, Norman Mailer and John Updike discussed in
their works the changed status of the individual or the Jew in changed scenario. All of them reflect nuances of Jewishness in their works though in their different ways. Malamud was not an experimentalist in fiction. But he was a humanist who aspired to recover justice and decency in the world. In *The Assistant* he exposes the possibility of realizing the American Dream as a new immigrant but also its harsh reality in an immigrant community in Brooklyn. Philip Roth manifests another aspect of Jewishness in his novel *Portnoy’s Complaint*. He presents the irony of the changed situation of the Jew, in which he is alienated not from the dominant culture but from his Jewish culture. In another Roth novel, *Letting Go*, one of the major characters reveals some of the crippling effects of being raised in the family trap. He feels trapped in his subjectivity. Roth’s characters share his own Jewish upbringing. Time and again he circles around the past and the guilt it instils. Roth’s Jewish characters feel envious of Americans who occupy ‘centre-field’ rather than the margins of society and who seemed to possess freedom from society and freedom from past. John Updike’s concern is Grace or the possibility of it. Like Bellow, Updike also discusses the fear of the void and anxiety about death. He observed in one of his essays that our fundamental anxiety is that we do not exist—or will cease to exist. He deals with the themes of imminence of the void, fear of death and the dim possibility of grace. Each one of these writers wrote about the dilemmas people were facing due to cultural and historical upheavals of Western civilization and anxiety created by them.

In these changed circumstances Bellow’s heroes suffer from anxiety because they are occupied with mental duty, images of death and scenes from the post-modern graveyard where consciousness of real existence is obliterated by commercialism and the widespread loss of humanity. Man, here, is a performer in a conditioned and material universe. Due to this materialistic universe and crushing pressures of urban life, anxieties arise out of the fragility of their sense of self and particularly their sense of social identity.
Bellow’s novels are persistently and dynamically occupied with contemporary history. His works reflect the flux of ideas and the major political and cultural crisis that have engendered anxiety in the Western World in the decades since the 2nd World War. Every phase of cultural growth as well as changes has been recorded in a careful detail in Bellow’s fiction. Saul Bellow, like the other novelists of his times, portrays the contemporary American life in his novels. His fiction takes place at the historical moment at which they were written and this gets reflected in his novels. His initial novels *Dangling Man* and *The Victim* were written under the immediate shadow of the 2nd World War, but they seem to reflect a general unease about the insecurity and fragmentation of modern urban life. The pressures of city life, whether it is Chicago or New York, inhabited by mass men, its magnificent skyscrapers overlooking urban devastation, provide Bellow with a powerful metaphor for the present historical moment to suggest the texture of urban experience. The contemporary history and urban life are deterministic in character. Like Bellow his protagonists are involved in a struggle to avoid being overpowered by this determinism and inability to do so create anxiety in them.

Bellow’s second novel *The Victim* reflects upon the roots of anti-Semitism, and although it does not treat the Holocaust directly, it is haunted by those six million deaths and the irrational hatred that caused them. It does not deal with anti-Semitism in an accusing way; rather, it looks at the conditions under which men see others as their enemies and the state of modern world where people belonging to different races remain doubtful and hopeless as an individual and constant anxiety prevails upon them. Critics have sometimes dismissed these novels as minor works in Bellow’s canon; to Harold Bloom, for example, they seem now to be ‘period pieces’ (418). These novels may lack the intellectual complexity of the later novels, but the crisis and self-evaluation their protagonists go through make them forerunners of the later Bellow heroes. The essential source of the anxiety and gloom of Bellow’s initial novels i.e. novels written in the forties must be located in his response to the times, to the years of
the Depression and the War. Edmund Wilson saw *Dangling Man* as “one of the most honest pieces of testimony on the psychology of a whole generation who have grown up during the war,” (“Doubts and Dreams” 78) while the poet Delmore Schwartz wrote: “Here for the first time I think, the experience of a new generation has been seized and recorded” (“A Man in His Time” 348-50).

Bellow’s novels of the fifties marked a radical change of direction. This change in attitude may be justified by the historical moment of its writing, a time of high expectations associated with post-war reconstruction and the liberal optimism of the early years of the Eisenhower administration. While the heroes in the early novels i.e. *Dangling Man* and *The Victim* suffer from painful introversion, the hero in *The Adventures of Augie March* published in 1950s, tries to locate his identity by constant experience of the external and social world which accounts for the open and inclusive form of the novel.

The sixties and seventies were the pinnacle of Bellow’s career. Though he produced only three novels in this period and a number of short stories, the general consensus would place *Herzog* (1964), *Mr Sammler’s Planet* (1970) and *Humboldt’s Gift* (1975) at the centre of his literary achievement. *Herzog* gave the impression of being a masterpiece because it could obviously be seen as the culmination of a line of development taken by the earlier novels. Its protagonist is a larger, more intellectual version of the alienated ‘dangling man’ trying to survive in the modern world, the Jewish inheritor and victim of the modern culture searching for meaning in contemporary urban life.

In his mental and spiritual turbulence Herzog, the protagonist, writes letters to relatives, friends, mistresses, philosophers, historians, and politicians. Through Herzog’s letters Bellow is able to present a far wider range of intellectual reference. Herzog himself is a historian, with a particular interest in the roots of Romanticism and by intermingling Herzog’s cultural ideas with his concern about his own experience Bellow depicts an equation between Herzog’s history and contemporary history. The Jewish intellectual, uprooted and
spiritually detached, seems to be lost in the disorderly contemporary American materialism.

At the end of sixties there was a radical cultural change due to political climate at that time. The early years of the sixties were marked by an optimism that developed around the confidence of John F Kennedy and his supporters who were young and energetic intellectuals. By the end of Sixties the dream of ‘New Frontier’, a term used for Kennedy Party, was in ruins, the euphoria replaced by a sense of dissatisfaction and defeat. The causes of this change can be located around two major issues of moral concern. First, America’s racial problems took on a public prominence. The other major issue that led to huge protest was the on-going agony of the war in Vietnam. Thus people of that time faced multiple anxiety creating situations. That decade was full of political activities taking place in America and it got reflected in the fiction of that time. The movement against racialism and the Vietnam War are such events which not only influenced Bellow but other writers also. These two great sources of social conflict coincided with the appearance of what can only be called a “youth culture”. The children born in the post-war baby boom and brought up in affluence and with a luxury that their parents had not experienced were coming of age in the late sixties. They faced two moral-political issues of racism at home and a bloody war abroad in which those in authority, who represented their parents’ generation seems to be acting with callous stubbornness and young generation’s response was of a general rejection of established values. In 1965, a group that called itself Students for a Democratic Society organized a march on Washington to protest against the war. The young generation expressed their individuality particularly through sexual liberation and attacked traditional values and the institution of the family. This deterioration of values and lack of previous order in society also generated anxiety.

In *Mr Sammler’s Planet*, Arthur Sammler, a man in his seventies, is a Polish Jew who came to America after the 2\(^{nd}\) World War. In this novel Bellow confronts Jewish genocide both during the Holocaust and the Israeli Six-day War.
for the first time and reflects his attitude towards Jewish community. Born in Poland to ‘enlightened’ Jewish parents, initially Sammler, the protagonist, does not perceive himself as part of the Jewish community but his Holocaust experience places him in a special relation to the world where he has to accept his status of being a Jew among non-Jewish people. He was affected much more profoundly by his wartime experience in Poland, where he had gone immediately prior to the war. Arrested by the Nazis, he and his wife were forced, along with many other Jews, to dig a mass grave for themselves, and were then shot. Sammler alone survived, struggling through a heap of dead bodies to climb from the grave; his sightless eye is a reminder of this experience. These Holocaust images plague Sammler and haunt the novel. During Holocaust Sammler’s basic existence as a human being was threatened. His sensations as he struggles through the pressure of bodies in a crowded bus and his fear of going underground to take the train revive the memories of the grave. Sammler’s life oscillates between nightmarish remembrance of Holocaust and disturbing reality of modern times. Thus Bellow’s novels demonstrate different situations in post-modern world which were generating anxiety in man.

Although some of Bellow’s earlier novels, most notably *The Victim* is concerned with Jewish experience of anti-Semitism; this novel is the first to have Nazi pogroms as one of its fundamental preoccupations. Besides this theme the novel is obsessed with the chasm between the old and new generation, the total disconnection of the younger generation from the values of the past. Arthur Sammler in *Mr Sammler’s Planet* takes up this issue and presents how young people have severed their connection with history by denying the values that history has brought to them. Saul Bellow happens to be a visionary writer who reflects such concerns in his novels which are still relevant today.

The seventies are characterized by a battle Bellow wages against the denial of inner realities and against the pre-emptive claims of modern scientific thought and pragmatism. The central concern of *Humboldt’s Gift*, published in 1975, is the position of the artist in the modern technocratic business world. This
theme is analysed through a number of interconnected issues: the ordeal of the individual poet in a mass society, the connection between art and business, the association between the spiritual and the material, the dislocation of modern American culture from its European history. In his interview with Jo Brans, Bellow said, “In Chicago it’s very hard to find people to talk literature to… There is no literary culture in the United States” (105). Chicago was established for material reasons and it was founded on blood, on the slaughter of the stockyards and gangsterism. This illuminates the novel’s persistent equation of money with blood and especially its images of cannibalism and vampirism. The most obvious of these are related to the manner in which the protagonist Citrine’s ex-wife and her lawyers are draining away his money. Devoid of the institution of family and the sense of belongingness related to it, the protagonist feels lonely and anxious.

America of the eighties is no longer the place where, for lack of a supportive tradition and culture, “Your soul made-no, burnt-its own clearing” (Roudane 267). The forgotten need of developing human impulses and spiritual faculties has succumbed to external prerogatives of cultivating style rather than substances. Bellow posits an opposition between the inner man and the outer world, where the life of the soul needed to protect itself, in detachment or introversion, against life-destroying externals, materialism or technology. Through his novels Bellow manifests that the cultural milieu of post-modern world becomes the foundation of anxiety experience.

Bellow’s *More Die of Heartbreak* published in 1987 elucidates the tragicomic manner in which modern heterosexual relationships have failed. It is the misogynous self-ironic report of two men exchanging stories of battle wounds sustained in romantic encounters. They present women as parasitic, metaphysically deficient and in need of “fixing”. The novel presents relationships which lack warmth and where people pay the heart lip service but everybody is more familiar with the absence of love than with its presence and they get so used to the feeling of emptiness that it becomes ‘normal’. In this cold
and indifferent world more people die of heartbreak than of radiation poisoning.

Thus most of Bellow’s novels reflect anxiety prevailing in culture of Bellow’s times. In a ‘foreword’ to a collection of lectures by Rudolf Steiner on *The Boundaries of Natural Science*, Bellow makes a comment regarding the relevance of soul in the modern world: “What is reality in the civilized West? A World of outsides without insides…of quantities without qualities, of souls devoid of mobility and of communities which are more dead than alive” (xii-xiii).

This insubstantial world creates anxiety in people. Bellow’s fiction reflects different types of anxiety people suffer from in America. He deals with various kinds of anxiety such as cultural anxiety, masculine anxiety due to change in the status of women and last but not the least anxiety over death.

Before bringing out the anxiety in the selected novels of Saul Bellow, a brief general survey of the concept of Anxiety is called for. Anxiety is a generalized mood that can occur without an identifiable triggering stimulus. It is often caused by the fact that the source of the danger is unknown. As such, it is distinguished from fear, which is an appropriate cognitive and emotional response to a perceived threat. The behavioural effects of anxiety may include withdrawal from situations which have provoked anxiety in the past (Barlow 125). Additionally, fear is related to the specific behaviours of escape and avoidance, whereas anxiety is related to situations perceived as uncontrollable or unavoidable (Ohman 573-593).

Until the advent of Freud and other depth psychologists, the problem of anxiety lay in the provinces of philosophy, especially in its branch of ethics and religion. The particular philosophers who dealt most explicitly with anxiety and fear were those whose primary concern was with the existential conflicts and crisis of immediate human beings. The philosophical background of the problem of anxiety provides us the historical background of the problem of anxiety in contemporary society.
In his book entitled *The Meaning of Anxiety*, Rollo May highlights the origin of certain cultural issues and attitudes which were crucial for much post-modern anxiety. One such issue was the dichotomy between mind and body, which was enunciated in its dominant modern form by Descartes and other thinkers of seventeenth century. “This dichotomy of mind and body not only created psychological disunity and anxiety for large numbers of people in late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but in some respects specifically set the problem of anxiety for Freud” (18).

Another such issue was the tendency of the culture of those times to be preoccupied with “rational,” mechanical phenomena and to suppress the “irrational” experience. Since the Renaissance, it was a widespread tendency to avoid the “irrational” phenomenon and to accept only those aspects of experience which could be made to appear “rational”. Since fears are experienced as specific and definite, they can be logically understood and can be studied through mathematical means. But anxiety is generally experienced as a profoundly irrational phenomenon.

May examines these tendencies by evaluating the background of the accepted attitudes and normative ideas of those times. He begins his analysis with the seventeenth century as he believes that in that century the systems of thought which have been dominant for the major part of the modern period were formulated. The philosophies of the seventeenth century presented the “rationalistic solution to the problem of man” (Cassirer 16). It was believed that autonomous reason would make possible the control of the individual’s emotions. Descartes gave impetus to this development by his sharp distinction between mind and the processes of thought on one hand and physical nature on the other. Descartes’ endeavour was to “explain all of the world except God and the soul by mechanical and mathematical laws….“ (Durant 167). The way was thus paved for the preoccupation in modern times with phenomena which were susceptible to mechanical and mathematical treatment and a tendency to eliminate those aspects of experience which were not vulnerable to such methods.
of treatment. The confidence that physical nature and human body were mathematically and mechanically controllable had vast anxiety dispelling effects. This was the reason that the specific problem of anxiety was rarely confronted by the thinkers of the seventeenth century.

An outstanding example of the method of dealing with fear in terms of mathematical reason is found in the writings of Baruch Spinoza. In this regard Cassirer remarks, “Spinoza ventures to make the last and decisive step in this mathematical theory of the world and the human mind. He constructs a new ethics… a mathematical theory of the moral world” (Cassirer 16). Spinoza defines fear in juxtaposition to hope. Both are considered to be the characteristic of the person in doubt. Spinoza’s guidance on how to conquer fear is in accordance with the general rational emphasis of the time, in which emotion is not repressed but rather made amenable to reason. At several points in his analysis Spinoza stands on the threshold of the problem of anxiety, as, for example, when he defines fear in juxtaposition to hope. The concomitant presence of fear and hope within the individual, sustained over a period of time, is one aspect of the psychic conflict that is perceived by later writers as anxiety. The central problem of anxiety does not intrude itself into Spinoza’s thought.

Like other eminent thinkers of seventeenth century, Blaise Pascal did not believe that human nature with all its variety and contradiction could be understood by mathematical rationalism. He believed that the laws that operate in human life are laws of chance and “probabilities”. He was directly concerned with anxiety, not only anxiety which he himself experienced but which he observed underneath the surface of the lives of his contemporaries, revealed through the “perpetual restlessness in which men pass their lives” (Craig 110). He noticed the unending efforts of people to divert themselves, to escape ennui and to avoid being alone. He felt that these diversions were the defence mechanisms of people to avoid being with themselves as it would be miserable and create anxiety. Pascal considered reason to be undependable as a practical guide. He saw the human situation much less optimistically than his
contemporaries. He observed, “We are placed in a vast medium, ever floating uncertainly between ignorance and knowledge” (Craig 84). Thus Pascal stands as an exception. As the cultural position of the seventeenth century in which Spinoza and other thinkers found themselves was different from 19th and 20th centuries, the central belief in the power of autonomous reason gave a psychological unity to the culture which was not threatened with serious disintegration until the nineteenth century.

The nineteenth century was an era of cultural compartmentalization. In aesthetics, there was the “art for art’s sake” movement and an increasing separation of art from the realities of nature. The nineteenth century was broadly characterized by a separation of reason and emotion. The seventeenth century belief in the rational control of the emotions had now become the habit of repressing the emotions. It was this psychological disunity which set the problem for the work of Sigmund Freud. A lot of anxiety was created due to this psychological disunity. It was at that point in history that Kierkegaard produced the most profound study of anxiety, “The Age of Anxiety”. As the disunity was creating anxiety, the search for a new basis of unity of personality, as pursued by Kierkegaard and later by Freud required confronting the problem of anxiety.

The disintegration in the unity of thought and culture was keenly felt by many existentialist writers. The existentialist movement dates from the German philosopher F W J Schelling’s Berlin lectures in 1841, delivered before a distinguished audience including Kierkegaard, Engels and Burckhardt (Tillich, *Existential Philosophy* 44-70). What all philosophers of existence oppose is the ‘rational’ system of thought and life developed by Western industrial society and its philosophical representatives” (66). These thinkers tried to overcome the traditional dichotomy between mind and body and the tendency to suppress the “irrational” aspects of experience. Their aim was to overcome the compartmentalization of their culture by a new emphasis on the individual as a living, experiencing unity. With these existentialist philosophers for the first time anxiety came directly into the foreground as a specific problem.
Among the existentialists it was Kierkegaard who was considered as “one of the most remarkable psychologists of all time, in depth, if not in breadth, superior to Nietzsche, and in penetration comparable only to Dostoevsky” (Brock 75). The central idea in Kierkegaard’s book on anxiety, published in 1844, is the relation between anxiety and freedom. Kierkegaard maintained that anxiety is always to be understood as “oriented toward freedom” (The Concept of Dread 138). Freedom is the goal of personality development; psychologically speaking, “the good is freedom” (99). He describes anxiety as the possibility of freedom and explains this phenomenon in everyday experiential terms. In day-to-day life every person has the opportunity and possibility of moving ahead in his development. Every possibility involves anxiety. But it is normal anxiety. Kierkegaard makes it clear that “neurotic anxiety is a more constrictive and uncreative form of anxiety which results from the individual’s failure to move ahead in situations of normal anxiety” (Sickness unto Death 52). When an individual is unable to move through accumulations of anxiety at various points in his growth, blockages in self awareness occur. Kierkegaard clarifies that selfhood depends upon the individual’s capacity to confront anxiety and move ahead despite it. He explains that in every experience of anxiety, there is an inner conflict. In each experience the individual wishes to move ahead, actualizing his possibilities, but at the same time wishes not to. He says that a healthy individual moves ahead despite the conflict whereas the unhealthy person withdraws in a “shut-in” condition, sacrificing his freedom. If one does not destroy old patterns and avoids creating new patterns, one is refusing to grow and shirking his responsibility to himself. This refusal to actualize one’s possibilities brings guilt toward one’s self. For Kierkegaard guilt feeling is always a concomitant of anxiety. Explaining another aspect of anxiety Kierkegaard says that belief in fate is often used as a method of avoiding anxiety and guilt. The kind of anxiety which is related to lack of inward certitude may show itself in negating attitude and superstition. “Superstition and unbelief are both forms of unfreedom” (Concept of Dread 124). Kierkegaard speaks of his cowardly age when people do everything possible to avoid anxiety. “One does everything possible by way of
diversions and the Janizary music of loud-voiced enterprises to keep lonely thoughts away, just as in the forests of America they keep away wild beasts by torches, by yells, by the sound of cymbals” (107).

Kierkegaard manifests that attempts to avoid anxiety makes an individual lose his most precious opportunity for education as a human being. He considers anxiety as a better teacher than reality because one can avoid reality by avoiding the negative situation but anxiety is a source of education always present because one carries it within.

Saul Bellow’s characters also try to avoid anxiety creating situations. Most of characters feel anxiety and his novels represent anxiety-ridden culture. Rollo May states that early twentieth century might have been termed the “age of covert anxiety” and the mid-twentieth century may be called as Auden and Camus call it, the “age of overt anxiety” (Meaning of Anxiety 4). The emergence of anxiety from an implicit to an explicit problem in society of that time, the change from anxiety as a matter of “mood” to recognition that it is an urgent issue which must be defined and clarified, was a significant phenomenon at that moment (4). It was not only in the field of psychology that anxiety was recognised as the “nodal problem,” in Freud’s words; but was seen to be nodal in such different areas as literature, sociology, political and economic thought, education, religion and philosophy.

Though in 1920s or 1930s signs of explicit, manifest anxiety were not abundant, one could find plenty of symptomatic indication of underlying anxiety, such as sense of loneliness, the quality of persistent searching leading to frustration. In 1950, overt anxiety manifested itself in literature. W H Auden’s poem entitled The Age of Anxiety most aptly presents the anxiety in twentieth century. Though the setting of the poem is the time of war, Auden makes it very clear that the underlying causes of anxiety are much deeper than merely the occasion of war. The four characters in the poem feel some common attributes of twentieth century such as loneliness, lack of significance as individuals and
experience of not being able to love and to be loved. Auden manifests that the sources of anxiety are to be found in certain basic trends in the culture of those times. One of the trends was the pressure towards conformity in a world in which mechanical and commercial values were glorified:

We move on
As the wheel wills; one revolution
Registers all things, the rise and fall
In pay and prices… (“Age of Anxiety” 45)

…this stupid world where
Gadgets are gods and we go on talking,
Many about much, but remain alone,
Alive but alone, belonging-where?-
Unattached as tumbleweed. (“Age of Anxiety” 44)

And these persons were anxious that they too may be drawn into the mechanical routine of meaninglessness:

…The fears we know
Are of not knowing. Will nightfall bring us
Some awful order…
Shall we ever be asked for? Are we simply
Not wanted at all? (“Age of Anxiety” 42)

People of mid-twentieth century were anxious because they had lost their faith in themselves as worthy and unique human beings and there was lack of meaningful communication with their fellow men.

The French author, Albert Camus, in a phrase parallel to Auden’s, designated twentieth century as “the century of fear”. Another writer who
distinctly emphasized the profound aspects of anxiety of those times was Franz Kafka. He wrote of those aspects of his bourgeois culture of the late 19th and early twentieth century which so elevated technical efficiency that personal values were largely destroyed. There was remarkable surge of interest in Kafka’s writings in 1940s because his work showed the temper of twentieth century very realistically and described the prevailing experience of many members of society of those times.

Another writer who wrote more explicitly about the sources of modern man’s anxiety was Herman Hesse. He presents the story of Haller, his chief character in the novel Steppenwolf as a parable of twentieth century. Hesse maintains that Haller and his contemporaries suffer from isolation and anxiety due to the fact that the bourgeois culture in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries emphasized mechanical rationalistic attitude at the price of the suppression of the dynamic, irrational elements in experience. Hesse does not give any absolute solution to the problem of anxiety of contemporaneous Western man because he considers his period to be one of those “times when a whole generation is caught …between two ages” which means that bourgeois standards and controls have broken down, but there are as yet no social norms to take their place. Hesse perceives Haller’s story as “as a document of the times, for Haller’s sickness of the soul…is not the eccentricity of a single individual, but sickness of the times themselves, the neuroses of that generation to which Haller belongs… a sickness which attacks” (Steppenwolf 28).

The emergence of anxiety as an overt sociological problem in an American community can be seen through the comparison between Lynds’ two studies of Middletown: Middletown and Middletown in Transition. In the first study, made in 1920s, overt anxiety is not present in people but seen from psychological point of view much of the behaviour of people was symptomatic of covert anxiety- for example compulsive work, “businessmen and workingmen seem to be running for dear life” in the endeavour to make money pervading struggle to conform, the compulsive sociability and frantic efforts of the people
to remain constantly busy (Middletown 87). The later study of the same community in the 1930s presents a very different picture: overt anxiety is now present. “One thing everybody in Middletown has in common,” the Lynds observe, “is insecurity in the face of a complicated world” (Middletown in Transition 315). The Lynds relate this insecurity in Middletown to the confusion of role which people were experiencing then. This chaos of conflicting patterns and confusion of roles were leading to anxiety. The Lynds observe that “most people are incapable of tolerating change and uncertainty in all sectors of life at once” (Middletown in Transition 315).

Conspicuous anxiety was present in symptomatic and overt forms in political scene also. Tillich’s description of the situation in Europe in the 1930s, out of which German fascism developed, also reflects the condition of America in mid-twentieth century:

First of all a feeling of fear or, more exactly of indefinite anxiety was prevailing. Not only the economic and political, but also the cultural and religious, security seemed to be lost. There was nothing on which one could build; everything was without foundation. A catastrophic breakdown was expected every moment. Consequently, a longing for security was growing in everybody. A freedom that leads to fear and anxiety has lost its value; better authority with security than freedom with fear. (The Protestant Era 245)

In such uncertain times, people seized the political authoritarianism in the desperate need to be relieved of anxiety. “Totalitarian in this sense may be viewed as serving a purpose on a cultural scale parallel to that in which a neurotic symptom protects an individual from a situation of unbearable anxiety” (Meaning of Anxiety 10). As Martin Ebon phrases it, communism is a product of “the desperate wish to find a purpose in what seems confusion and emptiness” (World Communism Today).
The emergence of the atom bomb brought the previously nascent and free-floating anxiety of many people into sharp focus. The stark possibilities of modern man’s situation are voiced in a forceful expression of the crystallization of anxiety at that moment by Norman Cousins:

The beginning of the atomic age has brought less hope than fear. It is a primitive fear; the fear of the unknown, the fear of the forces man can neither channel nor comprehend. This fear is not new; in its classical form it is the fear of irrational death. But overnight it has become intensified, magnified. It has burst out of the subconscious into the conscious, filling the mind with primordial apprehensions…. Where man can find no answer, he will find fear.

(Modern Man is Obsolete 1)

Anxiety became apparent as a central problem not only on sociological and political level but in philosophy and religion also in mid-twentieth century. It became most prominent in the thought of those theologians, like R Niebuhr, who were most familiar with the economic and political issues of that time; and in philosophers like Tillich and M Heidegger, who have themselves experienced the cultural crises of western society.

Paul Tillich characterized existential anxiety as “the state in which a being is aware of its possible non being” (Courage to Be 76). “Nonbeing” does not mean simply the threat of physical death- though probably death is the most common symbol of this anxiety. The threat of nonbeing lies in the psychological and spiritual realms as well, namely the threat of meaninglessness in one’s existence. Tillich listed three categories for the non being and resulting existential anxiety: Ontic (fate and death), Moral (guilt and condemnation), and Spiritual (emptiness and meaninglessness). According to Tillich, the last of these three types of existential anxiety i.e. spiritual anxiety, is predominant in modern times while the others were predominant in earlier periods (Courage to Be 76).

Niebuhr presents anxiety as the central concept of his theological doctrine
of man. To Niebuhr every act of man, creative or destructive, involves some element of anxiety. Anxiety has its source in the fact that man is on one hand finite but on the other hand man has freedom. Unlike “the animals he sees the situation and anticipates its perils,” and to this extent man transcends his finiteness. “In short, man, being both bound and free, both limited and limitless, is anxious. Anxiety is the inevitable concomitant of the paradox of freedom and finiteness in which man is involved” (Niebuhr 182).

Heidegger expanded and deepened Kierkegaard’s concept of dread. He explained that anxiety is not fear, being afraid of this or that object, but the weird feeling of being afraid of nothing at all. It is precisely nothingness that makes it present and felt as the object of our dread. In Heidegger nothingness is a presence within our own being,

Anxiety before Nothingness has many modalities and guises; now trembling and creative, now panicky and destructive; but it is always as inseparable from us as our own breathing because anxiety is our existence itself in its radical insecurity. In anxiety we both are and are not, at one and the same time, and this is our dread. Our finitude is such that positive and negative interpenetrate our whole existence. (qtd. In Barrett 202)

Like other fields of studies, anxiety gradually came to be seen as a central problem in learning theory, in dynamic psychology, and specifically in psychoanalysis and other forms of psychotherapy. The learning psychologists Mowrer, Miller and Dollard studied anxiety as a focal problem in learning theory. From the view point of dynamic psychology, Symonds aptly notes, “it would surprise most persons to realize how much of their behaviour is motivated by a desire to escape anxiety by either reducing it or disguising it in one way or other” (Symonds 138). Freud was right in saying that the solution to the riddle of anxiety “must cast a flood of light upon our whole mental life” (General Introduction to Psychoanalysis 341). He singled out anxiety as the crucial
problem of emotional and behavioural disorders. Freud’s study on the topic of anxiety was in the process of evolution throughout his life. Freud confesses in his last writings that he is still presenting hypotheses rather than a “final solution” to the problem (*New Introductory Lectures* 113).

Freud makes the conventional distinction between fear and anxiety. He affirms that in fear the attention is directed to the object, whereas anxiety refers to the condition of the individual and “ignores the object” (*General Introduction to Psychoanalysis*, 343). The other distinction he makes between normal and neurotic anxiety. The normal anxiety is the reaction to an external danger; he considers it as natural, rational and an expression of the ‘instincts of self-preservation’. Objective anxiety does not in itself constitute a clinical problem. When the development of anxiety is in amounts out of proportion to the actual danger, it is neurotic anxiety. The first theory of Freud states that when libido is repressed it gets transformed into anxiety and then reappears as free-floating anxiety or any symptom.

In his second theory, based on later analysis of patients of phobia and anxiety symptoms, Freud made a new theory with increasing emphasis on the role of the ego. Ego perceives the danger and the perception arouses anxiety. Freud now remarks against his first theory, “It is not the repression that creates the anxiety, but the anxiety is there first and creates the repression” (*New Introductory Lectures*, 119).

Freud finds the origin of anxiety in the birth trauma and fear of castration. These two concepts are interlinked and constantly reinterpreted in his writings. He adds, anticipating his later broadening of the birth concept, “It is very suggestive too that the first anxiety state arose on the occasion of the separation from the mother” (*General Introduction to Psychoanalysis* 344). Freud speaks of the danger of castration “as a reaction to a loss, to a separation,” of which the prototype is the birth experience. He holds that the danger situation in birth is “the loss of the loved (longed for) person…the most basic anxiety of all, the
primal anxiety of birth, arises in connection with separation from the mother” *(Problem of Anxiety* 99-100). Fear of castration later develops into dread of conscience, i.e. social anxiety; now the ego is afraid of the anger, punishment, and loss of love of the superego. The final transformation of this fear of the superego consists of death anxiety (105).

In his early writings Freud says that the symptom is developed to protect the individual from the demands of his own libido. But in developing his second theory he writes, “It is more accurate to say that symptoms are created in order to avoid the danger situation of which anxiety sounds the alarm” *(The Problem of Anxiety* 86).

Freud lays emphasis on the topology of the psyche in his final trend on anxiety. It came from his division of the personality into superego, ego and id. Explaining the topology further Freud discusses helplessness in anxiety. He holds that in neurotic anxiety the ego is made helpless by its conflict with id and superego. Looking at different theories regarding anxiety it is obvious that Freud has far-reaching contributions to the understanding of anxiety.

Otto Rank, who remained Freud’s closest colleague for twenty years, perceived anxiety through his belief that the central problem in human development is individuation. He considers life span of a human being as a series of experiences of separation, each experience presenting the possibility of greater autonomy for individual. Birth is the most dramatic event in this continuum of separation but the same psychological experience happens at all stages in personality development until ultimate separation in death. Anxiety is experienced due to the change from previous situations of relative unity towards the need to live as an autonomous individual. But anxiety is also experienced if the individual resists growth by refusing to separate from his immediate position of security. Rank’s understanding of anxiety was influenced by his famous study of birth trauma. According to Rank the primal anxiety present in the infant takes two forms throughout individual’s life, namely *life fear* and *death fear*. The life
fear is the anxiety at every new possibility of autonomous activity. It is the “fear of having to live as an isolated individual” (Trauma of Birth 175). Such anxiety occurs when a person apprehends creative possibilities within himself. These creative possibilities bring the threat of separation from previous forms of lifestyle and relationships. The concept of anxiety in creative activity is also seen in Kierkegaard.

The death fear is opposite to the life fear. Whereas the “life fear” is anxiety at going forward, becoming an individual; death fear is anxiety at “going backward”, losing individuality. Rank believed that each person experiences these two forms of anxiety in polarity. “Between these two fear possibilities, these poles of fear, the individual is thrown back and forth all his life, which accounts for the fact that we have not been able to trace fear back to a single root, or to overcome it therapeutically” (Will Therapy 175). A neurotic is one who cannot balance these two forms of anxiety. The healthy individual is one who can overcome anxiety to affirm his individual capacities, and can surmount the crisis of psychological separation necessary for growth and realize the different facets of new situations.

In Collected Papers on analytical Psychology Jung considers anxiety to be individual’s reaction to the invasion of his conscious mind by irrational forces and images from the collective unconscious. According to him anxiety is the fear of the dominants of the collective unconscious.

Some psychologists saw the problem of anxiety in a sociopsychological setting. They maintained in their different ways that anxiety arises out of disturbed interpersonal relationships. These were K Horney, E Fromm, and H. S. Sullivan. Their approach involves a new emphasis on culture. Horney holds that anxiety is a reaction to a threat to something belonging to the “core or essence” of personality; she is here in agreement with Goldstein’s concept, described earlier, “the phenomenon of anxiety belongs to the catastrophic condition. That is, anxiety corresponds on the subjective side to a condition in which the
organism’s existence is in danger” (Goldstein 91). Horney also maintains that anxiety is a reaction to a threat to some value which an individual holds essential to his existence as a personality.

According to Horney, “The typical conflict leading to anxiety in a child is that between dependency on parents – enhanced by the child’s feeling of being isolated and intimidated – and hostile impulses against parents” (New Ways in Psychoanalysis 82). Since repressed hostility deprives the individual of the capacity to recognise and fight against real dangers, and the act of repression itself creates inner unconscious conflict, such repression contributes to the child’s feeling of defencelessness and helplessness. Anxiety is the reaction to the threat to any pattern which the individual has developed upon which he feels his safety to depend.

Therefore in the problem of anxiety it is always crucial to ask the question what vital value is being threatened. Certain sexual or hostile inclinations arouse anxiety not because of the anticipation of their frustration per se, but rather because the expression of the inclinations would threaten some pattern of interpersonal relationships which the individual feels vital to his personality.

Neurotic anxiety involves excessive feelings of dependency and helplessness, but it also involves excessive feeling of hostility toward those persons upon whom one is dependent. Horney feels that the helplessness inheres in the fact that the person is in conflict between contradictory drives, each of which possesses a compulsive nature. Horney places a great deal of emphasis on the reciprocal relation of hostility and anxiety. She believes that by far the most common intrapsychic factor provoking anxiety is hostility.

The exceedingly valuable contribution of Horney to anxiety theory lies in her elucidation of the conflicting trends in personality as the sources of neurotic anxiety, and in her placing of the problem of anxiety squarely on the psychological level, with its necessary social aspects.
Harry Stack Sullivan understands anxiety in terms of personality as essentially an interpersonal phenomenon. Anxiety, according to Sullivan, arises out of the infant’s apprehension of the disapproval of the significant persons in his interpersonal world. It serves to restrain the infant, to restrict his development to those activities of which the significant other persons approve. The self is formed out of the need to distinguish between activities which produce approval and those which result in disapprobation. Anxiety restricts awareness and growth of personality. Hence Sullivan suggests clarification of anxiety as it makes possible expanded awareness and an expansion of the self, which means achieving emotional health (Conceptions of Modern Psychiatry).

Erich Fromm endeavours to understand modern man as a progressive cultural product by combining psychological and sociological approaches. In his work Escape from freedom (1941) he throws light on the dialectical nature of freedom. He asserts that the dialectic of freedom is present on individual as well as cultural level. The child begins life bound to parents by primary ties. His growth involves an increasing freedom from dependence on parents- the process called individuation. The child becomes aware of being a separate entity, of being alone.

This separation from a world which in comparison with one’s own individual existence is overwhelmingly strong and powerful, and often threatening and dangerous, creates a feeling of powerlessness and anxiety. As long as one was an integral part of that world, unaware of the possibilities and responsibilities of individual action, one did not need to be afraid of it. (29)

Anxiety as a cultural phenomenon is perhaps the highest as it has ever been in the West. In the United States anxiety is one of the most common mental health problems affecting a large number of population. There are a host of factors that are critical for the procedure of anxiety, which we all experience, to develop into a disorder of anxiety. Although the process of anxiety is
undoubtedly universal and occurs in all cultures, diagnosable anxiety appears to affect Western society, in particular Americans more than any other cultures. This implies that there are some characteristic factors of Western culture that are largely absent or not as pervasive in non-western cultures as in Western cultures.

Rollo May opines that the predicament of life became more pronounced, more difficult to live with and harder to resolve in the twentieth century. Twentieth century was a period of transition in which old values were meaningless and traditional mores no longer feasible. More people experienced more intensely the problem of Willie Loman in *The Death of a Salesman*, “He never knew who he was.” This basic dilemma inherent in human consciousness which is part of all psychological experience and present in all historical periods became more prominent in the times of drastic change in sexual conventions and religious beliefs. The individual’s self-image was shaken due to immense technological power surging up every moment, towering over his puny efforts. He lost his sense of significance because of collectivism-mass communication, mass technology and other “mass” processes which form modern people’s minds and emotions. People found themselves impotent before the possibility of nuclear war. They faced lack of sense of significance in this historical crisis when there was no clear right or wrong. All of these factors created anxiety, psychological confusion and apathy in people. People were unable to find any viable roles for themselves in such confused state of situations and the result was their loss of capacity for individual decision and responsibility. The loss of the experience of one’s own self created anxiety of meaninglessness and nothingness in people.

Historical factors in the twentieth century were largely instrumental in creating anxiety in Americans. The First World War, Great Depression and then the Second World War brought a drastic change in the previous order and values of the world. This new chaotic and fragmented world created an “age of anxiety”. Decades of protest, political agitation and unionization efforts were unfruitful in altering basic economic conditions. Near-revolutionary agitation of years 1916-19 ended in vain for reformers, unionist, socialist and other
dissenters. The long-term problems of farmers were aggravated during the 1930s by severe drops in the price of farm products and decline in consumer demand. Many parts of the country were struck by a multiyear drought. Crops failed year after year and local economies were ruined (Yannela 4).

The adversities generated by unemployment- homelessness, hunger, broken families, forced migrations and psychological traumas- were far worse and of far longer duration than the country experienced in any prior depression. All these conditions gave rise to anxiety.

After the Second World War, new and upsetting ideas began to spread through the population. Critics rejected the general faith in progress and the power of the rational mind. Sigmund Freud, the Austrian psychoanalyst, changed the view of human nature from that of a rational being to a complex animal of primitive urges, desires and emotional preferences.

Freidrich Nietzsche, one of the most important critics of the rationalism of the Enlightenment, blasted religion and famously claimed, “God is Dead” in Thus Spake Zarathustra. He claimed that Christianity manifested a “slave morality” which glorified weakness, envy and mediocrity. Though not widely read by his contemporaries, his writings seemed relevant in the atmosphere of WW1 pessimism. Thus people’s faith in religion was shattered which created a sense of insecurity and anxiety. The apocalyptic view of the 2nd World War indicated the overwhelming results of a loss of societal connectedness and those imperatives that govern a harmonious world.

The 2nd World War brought destruction to the world but America seemed to be profited by the war. Its industrial production more than doubled. In 1945, the US was the world’s only industrial nation whose economy had not been severely damaged or completely destroyed in the 2nd World War and by 1947 it produced about half of the world’s manufactured goods. In the 1950s the US became something that the world had never seen before; a society characterized by never-ending and sustainable abundance and this spirit of abundance was
captured in the title of Professor David Potter’s *People of Plenty* (1954). But this affluence adversely hampered the peace of human mind and restlessness could be seen in the American society. In the 1950s and 1960s, there was some triumphalism expressed in the US, some assertiveness about how the country was the best that had ever existed in the world. But there were also assertions about the sickness of American society. The ‘rat race’ of making money and more money to buy more and more useless things made people crazy. They were reduced to robotic consumers with no inner lives. This meaningless race to acquire more and more money to buy more things caused anxiety in people. Memory of the mass deaths of the 2nd World War also made people crazy. They were anxious and disturbed by paranoia about Communism and by the constant nuclear threat as a result of Soviet-US arms race. All these historical situations get reflected in Bellow’s work. His characters feel anxious and pressurised by the power of money in modern world.

Other factors which led to anxiety were lack of available housing for returning veterans, unemployment, high divorce rates, juvenile delinquency and mental illness. The high divorce rates, were usually explained as a consequence of quick and poorly planned wartime marriages or the result of couples drifting away from each other due to wartime separations. Thus, institution of family was also breaking up and causing anxiety due to absence of bonding. In Bellow’s novels we find his characters anxious due to breakdown of institution of family. They find themselves alone in this fast-changing modern world without support of family and meaningful relationships.

The reason for delinquency- offences against the law by people less than eighteen years of age- was assessed to be the breakdown of family life and parents who shirked responsibility for their children. What society called delinquency was considered to be the insensitivity and stupidity of parents, teachers and other authorities and the oppressive social order. The cause for this delinquent behaviour was the emptiness and meaninglessness of middle-class life and the miserable world that was being passed on to the young by the frenzied
In *Growing up Absurd* (1960) Paul Goodman argued that there were conspicuous social causes for deviant behaviour. He found the society at that time lacking in many things:

> Our abundant society is at present simply deficient in many of the most elementary objective opportunities and worthwhile goals that could make growing up possible… It dims the sense that there is a creation. It has no Honor. It has no Community. (12-13)

This absurdity, meaninglessness and lack of aim caused anxiety in Americans. Sloan Wilson’s 1955 novel *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* is a comment upon American search for purpose and meaning of life in a world dominated by business. It describes the lives of the youth of modern America.

> A lot of bright young men in gray flannel suits rushing around New York in a frantic parade to nowhere. They seemed to me to be pursuing neither ideals nor happiness- they were pursuing a routine. For a long while I thought I was on the sidelines watching that parade and it was quite a shock to glance down and see that I too was wearing a gray flannel suit. (qtd. in Yannella, *American Literature in Context after 1929*, 107-9)

That brief account became iconic in the 1950s: the man in the gray flannel suit became the principal metaphor of the period to describe the conservative young. The reason which caused anxiety was competitive success as the dominant cultural value which also became the dominant criterion for self-evaluation. Whatever threatened this goal caused anxiety in individuals. Bellow detests such attitude of conformity which destroys man’s individuality. His aim remains to uphold man’s unique individuality and a sense of self amidst myriad pressures.

Post-war American literature is occupied with juvenile offenders, wildly
rebellious youth, young men victimized by American society, hipsters travelling in groups cut off from mainstream society. Jack Kerouac’s *On the Road* was the post war period’s most influential account of troubled, alienated, struggling and sometimes sweetly romantic young couple. Sal Paradise, one of the characters in *On the Road* comments on casual sex, saying, “Boys and girls in America have such a bad time together, sophistication demands that they submit to sex immediately without proper preliminary talk,” by which he means, “No courting talk- real straight talk about souls, for life is holy and every moment is precious.”

Sal makes a remark about the American culture in general. Americans, he says, spend their lives doing, “what they think they’re supposed to do” (qtd. in Yannella 73-77). J D Salinger’s *The Catcher in Rye* (1951) became the most popular depiction of a troubled adolescent ever published.

The younger generation in the modern world was more anxious even though they led better lives than their parents and grand parents did. Their focussed endeavour to achieve and control events in their lives forced them to chase a dream and always be on the run. They were living in constant pressure and anxious about the outcome. Despite earning a lot of money, they realised they were not happy and satisfied. To be always part of the race to be successful in a materialisic world, people took on more they could handle. It created anxiety in them. Bellow also deals with such directionless youngsters who are chasing their dreams without knowing where they are heading. Everybody wants to be part of the main stream without knowing their role in it.

Like discussions of juvenile delinquency, discussions of mental illness were also widespread. The fact that mental illness was a serious contemporary problem was generally recognised during the 2nd World War. But post-war reports of great numbers of Americans as well as people in other countries who suffered from serious mental illness were constant and shocking. Norman Mailer in *The White Negro*, asserted that the concentration camps of the 2nd World War and the atomic bombings of Japan that ended it presented a ‘mirror’ to the human condition and a society that was ‘murderous’. A whiff of fear has come
out of every pore of American life and people suffered from a collective failure of nerve. ‘Psychopath’ was used broadly to mean a mentally unstable person. But in the psychiatric literature of that time with which Mailer was familiar, a ‘psychopath’ had criminal tendency and an antisocial mentality. Psychopaths were likely to have come from broken homes and brought up in the absence of stable parental figures, suffered childhood deprivations, presented discipline problems to teachers and other authorities and spent some time in an institution. Some of Bellow’s characters also suffer from mental illnesses reflecting the atmosphere of that time.

On the other hand, racialism also had crippling psychological effects. The destruction of black humanity by racism can be seen in much black writing of the post-war period. Ann Petry’s The Street (1946) was perhaps the most deranged of novels about black Harlem. Gwendolyn Brooks wrote keenly about the adverse effect of racism, as did poets like Sonia Sanchez and Etheridge Knight. The exploitation of black male sexuality by murderous white women and the distorting annexation of elements of black culture by a demented murderous white society were profoundly probed by Amiri Baraka in his one-act play, Dutchman. In Bellow’s Mr Sammler’s Planet, at the end of the novel the quarrel between a black and a Jew highlights the insecurities of different races in America. Everybody seems to be a victim of modern times and everyone is searching for his space in modern world. The scene of the quarrel also reflects the indifference of modern man towards his fellow human being as no one comes to the rescue of black man in that crowd. Everyone is a passive onlooker. Essential structure of values is threatened.

Through the 1950s, it was commonplace to say that US society was sick. Events and trends in the 1960s indicated that the sickness was intensifying. President John F Kennedy, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Senator Robert Kennedy were assassinated between 1963 and 1968. Hundreds of riots and other civil disturbances occurred in a number of cities. All these disturbing incidents throughout the 20th century created anxiety in people. Despite the
affluence in American society, there was emptiness inside.

The issues of anxiety in post-modern America dominated Saul Bellow’s fiction. His novels present a world which is paralyzed by appearances, where what is real and what seems real dangerously overlap. His characters struggle to maintain their individuality in a world of outsides without insides. With such a worldview of masked realities and unmasked appearances his characters feel baffled and anxious.

Bellow’s work always draws the attention of critics. Apart from the articles and reviews that have continually appeared in literary journals and magazines, there are a number of books devoted exclusively to Bellow as a writer. Major portions of these studies are concerned with his novels. Various critics place Bellow in different literary traditions according to the attitude they adopt towards him. They approach his work from different points of view and there is always a considerable variation in their interpretation and analysis of his fictional works. But the main thrust of the criticism focuses on Bellow’s intellectual moral stance and the philosophical statements and formulations which find a prominent place in almost every work of fiction he writes.

Judie Newman in *Saul Bellow and History* presents Bellow’s use of history and his investigations into various historical theories. Newman argues against what she views as the ‘overwhelming’ critical consensus that has interpreted Bellow as a writer concerned with the universal than with the particular, with the timeless than with the historical. Newman asserts that in their keenness to highlight the transcendent and religious aspect of his work, Bellow’s critics have failed to acknowledge his fascination with history and his increasingly complex examination of various theories of history. By offering a detailed analysis of selected novels of Bellow, Newman demonstrates his understanding of diverse theories of history such as Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche, Ortega, Karl Jaspers, Burkhart, Freud and Heidegger- whose ideas impinge upon Bellow’s fiction. In Newman’s view, Bellow’s frequent use of historical specificity, for example Depression in *The Adventures of Augie March*, the
Kennedy years in *Herzog* and the Holocaust and the Apollo moonshot in *Mr Sammler’s Planet* is not merely incidental but essential to the novel’s plot, structure, theme and characterization.

In his essay, *Bellow’s Sixth Sense: The Sense of History*, also Newman seeks to establish a historical interpretation of the fiction showing how the historical content of Bellow’s work far from being supplementary, does enter the novels functionally, organizing their structure and informing their thematic concerns. Newman’s major contribution to Bellow criticism is the assertion that Bellow’s novels consistently examine different approaches to history, and different retreats from it—“history as nightmare, as tragedy, as farce, as black comedy”.

Brigitte Scheer-Schazler in *Saul Bellow* elucidates the three main strands that intertwine in his personality: his Russian heritage, his Jewish upbringing and his familiarity with American scene. Bellow demonstrates the conviction that every individual tries to maintain, ‘at least an idea of himself’ amid the pressures of Contemporary America. Schazler depicts how Bellow’s characters are constantly forced to strive for balance and harmony between the inner and outer world. But Bellow never clearly demonstrates how this state of equilibrium can be achieved. Schazler appreciates Bellow’s wealth of perceptions, recognitions and insights he allows his characters to have, which make up for the lack of equilibrium in his fictional reality.

Describing the journey of Bellow as a novelist, who has evolved from a ‘young writer’ to an established novelist, Leslie Fiedler remarks, of all the novelists Bellow is “the one we need most to understand, if we are to understand what the novel is doing at the present moment” (“Saul Bellow” 1). Fiedler gives Bellow the credit for having at once accepted the full challenge implicit in the identification of the Jew in America, and yet not succumbing to the temptation to a kind of assimilation with the most insipid values of bourgeois life in United States. As Bellow emerges at the moment when the Jews for the first time move
into the centre of American culture, his success as a novelist, Fiedler asserts, cannot be viewed as exclusively his own; it must be seen in a larger context. A hundred, a thousand one-shot novelists, ephemeral successes and baffled eccentrics stand behind him, defining a subject: the need of the Jew in America to make clear his relationship to that country in terms of belonging or protest. The typical Bellow protagonist is seen as the lonely Jew in perpetual exile struggling to discover the meaning of existence.

In Saul Bellow: Vision and Revision, Daniel Fuchs identifies Bellow’s place in America’s literary and cultural history. He also examines Bellow’s manuscripts from The Adventures of Augie March through the Dean’s December to show that the author’s reviews tended to increase the imaginative and spiritual content of his work.

Earl Rovit in his essay “Saul Bellow and the Concept of Survivor” classifies Bellow as a city writer. City-themes and city-settings dominate in his novels and Rovit calls Bellow’s characters “incorrigibly urban” (99). He believes that no other American novelist except Dreiser has bestowed such care and unillusioned affection on the modern city. Bellow has captured masterfully “the urban texture of smells and heats, the characteristic neighbourhood, the humour, the indifference, the stimulation, the brutal movement of people in crowds, and the narcissistic frenzy of the individual alone in the middle of the crowds” (99).

Michael K Glenday in Saul Bellow and Decline of Humanism discusses Bellow’s theme of American denial of real reality. Glenday throws light on Bellow’s novels’ increasing concern with the haemorrhage to ‘real reality’ in America, exposing the inauthenticity of the everyday life, that system of reality which is dominant in American life. Glenday shows a need for a frank re-evaluation of Bellow’s vision. He questions the validity of Bellow long being represented as a humanist evangelist, as one whose art demands ‘the rediscovery of a moral humanism’ (Bradbury, Saul Bellow 28). Glenday finds that such a humanist view may have been until the appearance of Herzog. But with Herzog
and in each of the succeeding novels, Bellow’s representation of post-1960 America has suggested a culture of moral and spiritual downfall, materially-driven, inauthentic reality from which his heroes are forced to withdraw in distress. According to Glenday, the humanist effort simply cannot survive such moral and spiritual depletion in the culture.

Like Glenday, Jonathan Wilson’s study, *On Bellow’s Planet: Readings from the Dark Side* (1985) refutes the majority view of Bellow as a “lone voice on the apocalyptic battlefield, still sounding the virtues of humanism, upholding the values of community” as one that represents an error of some magnitude (Wilson 18). Wilson acknowledges the humanist dimension in Bellow’s fiction but asserts that it is only a safety-valve through which the hero temporarily escapes from reality. Submerged in this harsh, unaccommodating world, Bellow’s heroes persistently try to imagine a better one. A world of truth, order, harmony and love which they long for, to which they are sentimentally attached, but which they are never able to attain. Wilson maintains that Bellow’s novels embody a ‘static dialectic’ in which the opposing forces of order and chaos are irresolvable. He negates Bellow as a ‘life-affirming’ novelist.

In *Saul Bellow’s Moral Vision: A Critical Study of the Jewish Experience*, L H Goldman maintains that Saul Bellow’s writings symbolize the moral vision that is an essential part of the Jewish outlook. Bellow believes in the divinity of the individual who has the ability to overcome the obstacles that challenge or obstruct his endeavours and to determine his own destiny. Goldman throws light on the relevance of Bellow’s fiction in the period of the forties which was a period of transition, a period that ushered in and saw the end of the 2nd World War. This period gave rise to moral and ethical problems and failed to provide feasible systems of belief or worldview. After the war people needed a literature that would restore dignity to man and a value to his life. Goldman perceives Saul Bellow as a positive writer who brought with him a worldview that was life-sustaining, based on a belief in the inherent goodness of man, the basic significance of existence.
In his essay “Saul Bellow and the Philosophy of Judaism”, Goldman highlights the ways in which Bellow presents a consistently Jewish philosophical view which is all pervasive in his works. He maintains that Saul Bellow’s writings symbolize the moral outlook that is an integral part of the Jewish worldview. Unlike other contemporary writers who agonize over a nihilistic outlook on life, Bellow’s works strive to re-establish the foundations of society by reaffirming the world’s need for morality, for the return to the humanism of Judaism. Goldman suggests that for Bellow writing is a way of coming closer to God. Goldman affirms Bellow’s novels as a form of survivor literature, testimonials to life. Labelling Saul Bellow as the most enduring survivor Bradbury also deems ‘survival’ as one of Bellow’s most lasting themes (“The Nightmare in Which I’m Trying to Get a Good Night’s Rest” 15).

Ellen Pifer in Saul Bellow: Against the Grain affirms that Bellow’s fiction is radical. Going against the grain of contemporary culture and its secular pieties, the novelist undermines accepted notions of reality and challenges the ‘orthodoxies, created by materialistic values and rationalist thought’. Bellow’s novels actually test the assumptions of traditional realism- the genre with which his fiction is usually identified.

Structuring Bellow’s life and career into periods Gerhard Bach presents mixed response of readers and critics towards Bellow throughout his career. Bach manifests Bellow’s view regarding his heritage. Bellow claims for himself the narrative tradition of nineteenth century (Eastern) Europe. While he rejects ethnic or racial hyphenation and insists upon the label American, Bellow consistently portrays characters struggling with a Jewish heritage of suffering-physical and spiritual. Bach also highlights strategy adopted by Bellow in his fiction. He exposes the two faces of any given issue of contemporary life with equal compassion. It is the energy centre of much of his work. Bellow’s claims for his protagonist find expression in three major concerns. These are the concerns about an individual’s relationship to reality, language, and death. Bellow implements each element with a view to its dialectic dynamics, a
technique by which he manages to keep them from becoming dead theories. Thus, ‘reality’ in Bellow cannot exist without its counterpart ‘appearance’; ‘language’ finds its counterpart in ‘art’ and ‘death’ in ‘transcendence’. Their fusion creates the inner dramatic texture of each novel (“Saul Bellow and Dialectic of Being Contemporary” 5).

John W Aldridge also holds the same view about Bellow. He observes that Bellow’s imagination is dialectical and is always engaged in a debate between the secular and the transcendental. Aldridge observes that Bellow is different from his contemporary writers in his emphasis on “desperately affirmative view of human experience” (211). He shows his strong disagreement with the idea of cultural nihilism and alienation which pervades so much of modern and contemporary literature and which he believes has its source far more in literature than in the actual life it claims to reflect. Aldridge also throws light on intellectual culture of Saul Bellow’s fiction which is far more extensive than that of his American contemporaries. Ideas for Bellow are not only a primary basis of subject-matter, nor are they incompatible with the actualities of real life. Rather they serve to broaden and intensify his perception of those actualities, and they help him to dramatize what he sees as the vital connections, so complexly investigated in all his novels, between worldly experience and the abstracting transcendences of history, morality, philosophy and religion (Classics and Contemporaries).

A completely new thematic topic of interest in Bellow’s criticism appeared in the 1980s with the emergence of Ben Siegel’s exhaustive treatment of Bellow’s attitudes about and relationship to modern academe. Siegel perceives that Bellow blames the academic environment for much what is wrong with the nation’s culture, especially its literary culture. Siegel begins with the contention that almost no other subject provokes Bellow as much as the subject of the modern university. He presents a thorough analysis of Bellow’s numerous fictional and other recorded statements about the state of modern university, the American education system, the state of modern culture and arts (“Saul Bellow
Keith Michael Opdahl suggests that ambiguity and vagueness of the endings in Bellow’s novels derive from his continual experimentation with new kind of character and different style as well as from the very ambition of his quest for meaning. Opdahl defines the conflict inherent in Bellow’s characters’ two opposing visions and absurd discrepancy between human aspirations and achievement elucidated by Bellow. The centre of Bellow’s fiction lies within this general tension. Categorizing Bellow’s heroes as childish, masochistic and anti-social, Opdahl indicates that Bellow’s protagonist is an American hero groping toward manhood. Wavering between a need to be loved and withdrawal from a world which does not love him as he wishes, he is immature and a victim of himself. Bellow’s philosophical message is seen by Opdahl in terms of the final goal of the protagonist which according to him is directed towards religious transcendence (Novels of Saul Bellow).

Marcus Klein designates Bellow as an ‘entirely city writer’ (“A Discipline of Nobility” 207) whose protagonists are oppressed, distracted and threatened by the sheer clutter of things in city life. The problem of Bellow’s alienated hero can be reduced to a single problem: the sacrifice of self demanded by social circumstances. Hero’s freedom is threatened by the pressures of overpowering crowds and the ‘fat gods of materialism’ (208). Klein asserts that Bellow’s novels work within the fabric of motion from alienation towards accommodation. The fundamental issue in Bellow’s fiction is the progress of the soul through its freedom, from isolation to affirmation of ordinary life in the world. Klein considers gesture of escape from burdens made by Bellowian hero to be ‘an extreme romantic gesture’ (211).

Siegel places Bellow among those earnest novelists who fervently confronted the cultural turmoil of the sixties. He maintains that Saul Bellow has come closer than any other novelist to transforming into fiction those forces that isolate the sensitive American from his peers. Bellow feels that pressures and
distractions of American city life contribute immensely to the erosion of national thought and art. Every Bellow protagonist, caught up in the urban clutter of noise, dirt and smell, is forced to recognize that all dreams of escape are sentimental nonsense and that no condition guarantees relief from inner dilemmas or external pressures. Bellow makes clear that negation for its own sake offers society or individual few meaningful values. He urges man to struggle rather than bemoan his fate in an age that is complex, hostile and more dishevelled than revolutionary (“Saul Bellow and Mr Sammler”).

Howard Harper indicates the two main themes of existential dilemma, of man lost in a world he never made, and of man’s longing for transcendental powers. Bellow’s characters are caught between a desire for order and meaning and a society that offers chaos and meaninglessness. They seem to have a compulsive need to synthesize, to make coherent sense out of the apparent absurdity of his world, to feel that his life has some transcendent meaning. Bellow calls life a mystery and the exploration of this mystery, in all its complexity and contradiction, is the purpose of his art. According to Harper, each of Bellow’s novels creates its “own unique view of human conditions” (Desperate Faith 62). Bellow believes that in this bewildering world of twentieth century man may seem to be nothing but he is obviously something. And what he will become is purely a matter of choice and this choice is a matter of faith. Harper maintains that in Bellow’s view, faith is not a reflex action; it must be earned through human experience and it cannot exist without knowledge of profound despair.

In his book on Saul Bellow, Dutton manifests that themes of Saul Bellow are hardly original. What is of importance is the clarity of vision which Bellow imparts to his themes. His themes include the old established counterclaims of the individual verses impersonal mechanical society and individual in self conflict. According to Dutton the distinctive achievement of Bellow lies in his depiction of the individual in such a society, for it is the plight of man, not society that is emphasised throughout Bellow’s work.
Dutton observes Bellow’s heroes find the complexities of their dilemma not only in alienation from society; they are confronted by a kind of conflict within themselves. The ‘strong sense of self’ is Bellow’s greatest concern. Despite society being uncomfortable, indifferent to the heroes, at odds with their behaviour and ideals and hostile to their imaginations, they are able to apprehend its mysteries. They learnt its nature gradually. But the ‘self’ evades them. The ‘self’ which is, on the one hand, capable of ‘god like reason,’ and, on the other hand, is capable of unbelievable stupidities and absurd actions. Dutton maintains that in Bellow’s novels man, blessed or cursed with an imaginative consciousness, is forever in a state of self-transcendence. Through his imagination, man would be something other than what he is or what he seems to be. Dutton affirms that Bellow’s novels are narrative dramatizations of the fact of this dilemma of existence; they move not towards a resolution, but towards a revelation of human condition (Saul Bellow).

Sarah Blacher Cohen highlights the comic aspect of Bellow’s novels. Abhorring the ‘hollow man’ concept of character and the tone of ‘elegy’ which has prevailed in modern literature, Bellow prefers the use of comic in his works. But the fact that Bellow attacks doomsday writers for expressing bitterness does not mean that his own writing concentrates only on the genial aspects of things, that it ignores the contemptible and the acrimonious. While Bellow’s heroes yearn for the coming of messianic times, he clarifies that the blessed age has not yet arrived. Cohen emphasizes that in Bellow’s novels the damnable is still widespread. He also affirms that reading Bellow’s comedy which concludes with his leading principle, “all is well in this most perfect of world” is to interpret the import of his work and to undermine the complexity of his vision. Bellow unsparingly exposes what is dreadful, corruptive and brutalizing in modern life. Cohen throws light on the question that recurs through most of Bellow’s novels: how man can discover who he is as well as maintain his dignity amidst so many detrimental and enervating forces. But despite the negative forces in Bellow’s novels, the deteriorating city with its foul air and bad influences, its stampeding
mobs overrunning the individual, unpredictable disasters, meaningless wars, emotional bankruptcy and ‘poverty of soul’- there is never a total submission to despair. Bellow retaliates with comedy. He uses comedy to interrupt, resist, reinterpret and transcend adversity.

Edmond Schraepen also calls attention to the comic aspect of Bellow’s novels. He asserts that Bellow is aware of the world’s pressures on the self and of the forces bent on destroying it. Bellow realizes that people in modern times willingly and gladly indulge in the boundlessness of the modern consciousness. But despite the chaotic, disturbing and overwhelming reality Bellow believes that it is still possible to communicate about the world we live in. This effort to make sense creates great tension at the heart of Bellow’s work. Schraepen holds that through his fiction Bellow has devised a strategy for the survival of the essential self. His strategy is two-pronged: on the one hand, Bellow thinks that one can still try to make sense of the world, and use reason to confront its irrationality; on the other hand, Bellow perceives that the realm of the unconscious presents the novelist with a large field to be explored and he sees this surveying of a largely unexplored territory as part of a resistance movement against the colonization of ‘private sphere’ by the ‘public sphere’. Investigating the unconscious is associated with a defence of the self against suffocating, destructive forces. And this latter strategy of exploring the unconscious is used by Bellow by using the mould of comic mode through which Bellow manages to ‘naturalize’ the supernatural. Schraepen asserts that Bellow’s gift for naturalizing the supernatural goes hand in hand with his knack for intensifying the ordinary.

In his essay “Saul Bellow and Norman Mailer: The Secret Sharers”, Earl Rovit observes the surprisingly wide area of convergence that both writers share despite their very obvious differences. Both men are first generation urban Jews of middle-class background and socialist sympathies, both have been thoroughly brought up in the best education that America could offer them. Both of them accepted with complete seriousness the dictum that the democratic artist must take an active role in the critical interpretation of his culture and both writers
have been seasoned ‘intellectuals’ although of very different varieties. Rovit remarks that Bellow has characteristically directed his intelligence toward questions concerning the moral possibilities of contemporary life; he has ardently identified himself as a writer who very consciously grapples with the desperate ambiguities of morality in a world where religious sanctions have lost hold, except as a sentimental judgment and an unappeasable nostalgia. The problematic theme to which Bellow has been compulsively drawn is that of trying to reconcile virtue with the fact of self-consciousness. He wants to explore the possibilities of a good and dignified life when modern man must assume the traditional function of God, when he must judge his own frailties, cowardices and despicable motives. Rovit imagines Bellow as “an essayist of the Enlightenment” who struggles to arrive at a workable moral identity.

John Jacob Clayton interprets Saul Bellow’s fiction in *In Defense of Man*, by taking into account the central character. The study of the central character assumes special significance in understanding Bellow’s ‘message’. By analysing and unfolding the psychic patterns created within the protagonist’s mind by the pressure of his circumstances, Clayton highlights some persistent contradictions in Bellow’s vision. First, Bellow takes a stand against the cultural nihilism of the twentieth century, against the Wasteland, and against the belittlement of human life in modern society. Yet Bellow is himself a depressive. Second, Bellow rejects the tradition of alienation in modern literature and his fiction upholds the value of brotherhood and community, yet his main characters are all masochists and alienates. Third, Bellow is particularly hostile to the underestimation of the ‘separate self’ in modern literature and he values individuality very much, yet ‘the state of grace’ which his heroes approach is the “polar opposite of the individuality Bellow loves and wishes to defend” (4). Most of the Bellow’s heroes raise a question, ‘whether life can go on?’ The final voice of Bellow’s fiction and his answer to this question are of desperate affirmation of an ‘anguished yes’ (5).

Clayton demonstrates the cultural confluence of two main streams in Bellow’s fiction: the Jewish and the American experience. Jewish culture is
essentially affirmative. It hopes. Bellow is not only a part of the affirmative Jewish tradition; he is deliberately a part of it. He knows that Jewish writers have said ‘Yes’ in the face of suffering and he longs to say ‘Yes’. On the other hand, Bellow also imbibed American culture. Bellow’s defence of human dignity is particularly American. In its negation American literature still affirms human dignity.

In 1960s critics like Leslie Fiedler and John J Clayton had both deplored Bellow’s limitation in presenting real or vivid female characters. Irving Malin was also troubled by the absence of any lengthy discussion of Bellow’s women. Taking this issue seriously Ada Aharoni tried to elaborate on this topic. For her the reason behind Bellow’s limitation in portraying women is his artistic technique. According to Aharoni Bellow presents his female characters through the minds of his male protagonists. The narrators are generally men going through various existential crises, the female characters in comparison, often do not have this same depth of emotional and intellectual complexities as the heroes. Aharoni also highlights Bellow’s tendency to illuminate certain societal attitudes towards women rather than fully delineating their characters. By analysing a few of the representative central female characters appearing at different periods of Bellow’s writing, Aharoni delineates Bellow’s characterization of female characters.

In *Flight from Women in the fiction of Saul Bellow* Joseph F McCadden studies Saul Bellow from a different perspective. Bellow is seen as part of a ‘misogynist tradition’ in American literature. Throughout Bellow’s fiction there is no relationship where the man and the woman meet one another on equal terms and create a long-lasting bond that leads to emotional stability. Marriage inevitably fails in Bellow’s fiction and the wife is accused of taking advantage of the hero’s trusting nature in the pursuit of money and prestige. Bellow contrasts his hero’s willingness to love with the selfishness of women. The anxiety and suffering women compel the hero to evaluate his own character and to withdraw from the world. By examining the hero’s relationship with women, we find a
fresh perspective on the hero’s feelings about himself and his way of relating to the world. The study argues that Bellow portrays women as obstacles to hero’s spiritual growth, obstructions that his most successful protagonists learn to transcend.

Ram Prakash Pradhan probes Bellow’s technique of women’s characterisation and reason behind the oblique portrayal of them in *The Woman in the Novels of Saul Bellow*. Pradhan also analyses how Bellow’s Jewish identity affects his portrayal of women. He manifests that aim of Bellow is not the characterisation of women; his objective is to struggle against the dominant mood of modernist despair for which he needs a powerful masculine voice which might be effective in removing the general despair. Besides that Bellow’s Jewish background gets reflected in his portrayal of women. In the Jewish religion woman is honoured in a household in the company of her husband. As per the rules of patriarchal society, the woman has to occupy a subordinate place to man, within the limits of family life. But Bellow has a balanced attitude towards women. He advocates freedom for women. He also elucidates certain societal attitudes towards women rather than fully painting their characters.

Dr S Josh in *Saul Bellow and Masculinity* makes a comprehensive study of an important theme in modern American fiction, namely, masculinity as reflected in the fiction of Saul Bellow. Josh represents theme of masculinity as experienced by the male immigrant American Jews against the background of the fast changing relationship between men and women in the American society. Josh tries to explain the meaning and term of masculinity in the contexts of feminism, psychoanalysis and gay liberation. According to Josh, Bellow’s protagonists under the stress and strain of their gender burdens are finally able to look at this new sex equation in a positive and accommodative spirit.

Bellow presents his heroes caught in vast urban complexes of modern America, a world of distraction and frustration. They are ridden by anxiety, guilt, mental tensions and fear of death. They feel crushed by the bitter facts of life. Bellow uses his novels as means of exposing the inauthenticity of everyday life,
that system of reality which is dominant in American life. Bellow’s heroes are always in conflict with society. Through his novels Bellow tries to devise a strategy for the survival of the self in such a world. The struggle to maintain a sense of self creates anxiety in his heroes.

Bellow’s heroes experience different kinds of anxiety in their lives such as masculine anxiety, cultural anxiety and death anxiety. They suffer from multiple anxieties to survive in this modern world. The present study deals with different kinds of anxiety in the selected novels of Saul Bellow. First, Bellow’s fiction registers a unique twentieth century American masculine anxiety through his numerous male protagonists who sense intuitively the conflicting ironies and imperatives of their own engendering. The rise of feminism has posed serious challenges to masculinity and the foundation of patriarchal society. It questioned the gender differences and the pervasive patriarchal biases of Western civilization. Change in the attitude of women created a new kind of crisis in traditional patterns of male authority. According to Jewish tradition, a woman is supposed to be a wife and mother. Bellow has high regards for the tradition of Judaism and its division of roles of men and women. Initially all of Bellow’s heroes believe in patriarchal system. They want subjugation of women to the male ego. They are not able to accept their changed role in society. Like misogynists, most of Bellow’s heroes believe that women are flawed creatures and have a hostile attitude towards them. But unfortunately, the women they come across are contrary to their expectations. They are ready to change their roles with men and challenge their masculine values. In such a changed scenario where women are more powerful and conscious of their rights, men find themselves weak and emasculated and re-evaluate their roles as men. Bellow shows the anxiety his heroes experience while dealing with this changed situation and how they adjust themselves to this new found position in the society.

Second, Saul Bellow has explored thoroughly the effects of American cultural anxiety through a variety of characters. On one hand, most of Bellow’s
heroes suffer due to their Jewish background and, on the other hand, they suffer because of negative effects of modern culture of America. His novels explore the social and cultural position of the Jews having a marginal status in America, not belonging to either of two cultures, individual’s marginal status in the eyes of others and personal inner experience of being marginal. Many critics see Jewish experience in Bellow’s fiction symbolic of modern alienation. The problem of alienation, identity and powerlessness all form a kind of connection between the oppressed Jew and the faceless, modern man. In the aftermath of the second World War, with its unparalleled human suffering and meaningless evil, modern man saw in the Jew the prototype of the victim, whose history of alienation and persecution seemed to match, “the spiritual state of all sensitive men in an age of madness” (Fiedler, “Breakthrough” 15-35). George Clay wrote in 1957, “Issues that have long been intensely alive for the Jew- his search for identity…his daily struggle to be regarded as an individual- are coming more and more to occupy all mid-century Americans…” (46). Bellow shows his characters’ ongoing struggle to attain a firm sense of who they are and what they stand for as an individual. Their denial of Jewishness is linked to their inability to maintain their integrity. The apocalyptic experience of Holocaust put into question everything that people believed before. It radically altered the survivors’ concept of reality. It was an attack on the core of existence. Bellow himself says that during the Holocaust, Germany waged a war against the separate self, “the individual’s consciousness of his own existence” (Bellow, “Some Notes” 23). Lasting effect of barbarism is powerfully conveyed in Bellow’s work. Holocaust survivors continue to suffer decades after their initial victimization. Bellow’s focus is on the consequences of survival: distortion of the creative impulse, damage to the capacity to love and religious confusions and lack of faith. Survivor victims are marked forever by their Holocaust experience. While the overall perspective of Bellow is Jewish, the milieu within each novel is generally multicultural where each race feels its own sense of persecution. Bellow goes beyond the specific Jewish context of his novels and he is concerned not about the Jew but humanity as a whole.
Third kind of anxiety is Anxiety over death. Saul Bellow suffered a major blow in 1924 with the death of his mother. The event coupled with an early bout with tuberculosis, left him permanently scarred with an anxiety over death. This death anxiety gets reflected in many of Bellow’s novels. He perceived death as central to his characters’ psychology. Overshadowing each of Bellow’s protagonists is this terror of death- in some disguised, in some more direct, in all fused and confused with the question of human survival and the survival of humane values.

Initially most of the heroes try to negate the fact of death and avoid people who are suffering and evade references to death. But it is only after accepting the fact of death; they turn to an assertion of significant life. Hero’s anxiety over death and his avoidance of the concept of mortality separate him from other ordinary people and from humanity at large. Death remains present in heroes’ unconscious though they think their way clear of it. Some characters’ anxiety over death is also connected with guilt feeling over their own survival. The anxiety over death is related to illicit sexuality and guilt feeling over one’s own survival. Thus death anxiety is related to many other emotions and anxiety is not only over the death of the body but also over the death of the soul. Bellow feels that confrontation with death makes our life authentic and after facing death people understand the value of life.

The following chapter presents the anxiety of males due to changed status of women and how they deal with it.