Passion and perception are the two grand contrary aspects of a tragedy; the former suggestive of darkness and defeat and the latter suggestive of light and victory. The tragic hero suffers as his world of illusion is blown away by the winds of reality. The agony of defeat alienates him and fills his life with darkness. It becomes for him a kind of spiritual experience which makes him grope in the dark of the unknown for a way out. The phase of passion is thus a period of excruciating pain when "the soul stands naked and speaks alone with its naked destiny" as Lukacs observes. And during this heavy, dark period "everything vague and uncertain, everything hazy and shaded ceases to exist and there remains only the pure and transparent air which now hides nothing. What we see now are the final question and the final answers" and the tragic hero stands bathed in a new light, having secured a new vision and a new knowledge of his selfhood. The essence of tragic experience is this knowledge or perception the tragic hero attains after his encounter with evil and the consequent suffering. As Camus observes, "Oh light!" is the cry that all the characters of the classical tragedy make when they come face to face
with their destiny. With this light the tragic heroes gain a victory and they remain undefeated in their defeat. That is why it is said by Nietzsche that life is good because it is painful.

Suffering is the unavoidable destiny of any tragic hero. It is his only way of salvation. He can gain his identity and realise his self only through the searing in the 'wheel of fire'. The words of Prometheus, "Whatever the peril, the doom, the pain/Self-existent I still remain/Zeus's hand can never destroy me" epitomize the essence of any tragic hero. A tragic hero suffers, according to Aristotle, because of hamartia, an inherent defect in his character. The tragic hero is noble, worthy of respect and a model for all but it is necessary for him to fall down from his elevated state to teach everyone the dignity of life and its mystery. The fall of an innocent hero, as Aristotle says, will only generate feelings of pity. So, the hero is made responsible for his fall with a flaw on his character. Accordingly, Oedipus falls because of his pride and the heroes of Shakespeare also fall because of inherent defects in them like jealousy, credulosity, vaulting ambition etc. The tragic hero suffers also on account of his high sensitivity. He is more than usually sensitive to the terrible disrelations he sees about him and experiences in himself. He is also intensely aware of the mighty opposites in the universe and in man, of the gulf between desire and fulfilment, between what is and what should be. This kind of suffering is suffering on a high level, beyond the reach of the immature or brutish, and for ever closed to the extreme optimist,
the extreme pessimist, or the merely indifferent. Suffering borne with dignity makes the protagonist another star in the dark of nothingness.

Perception is the ultimate aim and achievement of tragedy without which a work ceases to be a tragedy. It is the perception that man achieves after suffering that makes his spirit rise superior to physical defeat and death. Suffering that does not lead to perception is meaningless and a total waste. According to Kenneth Burke "It is deplorable, but not tragic, simply to be a victim of circumstances . . . sheer victimization is not an assertion, and it naturally makes not for vision but for frustration."

In the phase of perception the tragic hero gains invaluable knowledge about himself and attains authenticity. The search for authenticity which is as old as man takes the form of tragedy or a quest in literature. Such a search is unique to man as he alone among the creatures of the earth can turn in on himself, analyze himself and study his own nature and purpose. The tragic hero comes into an existential contact with reality when he unexpectedly faces a radical change in his destiny or Peripeteia, in the words of Aristotle. For example, Oedipus is informed by Tiresias that the murderer he seeks is Oedipus himself. When the tragic hero thus suddenly faces the reality, he is often shaken into the depth of his being. With the horrible reality having dawned on Oedipus his condition changes from "first of man" to "most accursed of men" and his attitude changes from the proud "I must rule" to the
humble "I must obey." The changed perception upsets his cozy self-assurance and the value he has cherished before. Nevertheless such an existential experience gives the tragic hero the much needed self-realization through which he may rise above the lower level of his existence and become more than he is. A new horizon operates where the customary values of everyday life seem to lose absoluteness and their certitude. Because of his integrity, his openness, his dynamism, because of his spiritual principle he rises above the lower level of human existence and comes into contact with reality in its totality. Lucien Goldman makes the same observation in his essay, The Tragic Vision, "Tragic man ceases to be able to understand the life he led before his moment of conversion, and sees that all his earlier values have been overturned. What was previously great now seems infinitesimally small and the unimportant has now become essential." He quotes Lukacs, "Man can no longer tread the paths that he walked before since he can no longer see which way he should go. With the ease and grace of a bird he now soars up to previously unscaleable heights, and with sure and certain steps crosses unfathomable gulfs."

It is the perception that man attains through suffering that makes a tragedy a triumphant celebration of life. A tragic hero like Oedipus, as a body, as a man may be a thing to be pitied; he is blind, feeble, ragged and dirty. But now after his fall, he becomes a doer, not sufferer. His suffering and the consequent self-knowledge give him power. Thus Oedipus exemplifies the
great truth that the tragic hero may be physically weak but spiritually strong and may retain his dignity in failure and death. A tragic hero gains size by his encounter with certain horrible realities and it gives him the tragic stature which is spuriously attached to the royal or high born in our minds. The old fisherman Santiago comes to occupy the most venerable place in our hearts not because of his external charm but because he goes after the big fish and achieves a spiritual triumph in the midst of loss and suffering. Santiago goes too far out and must pay the price of his assertion in a naturalistic universe. But he gains because the best qualities in him come out as the result of his struggle.

James formed his ideas of passion and perception from his philosopher father who in turn derived his ideas from the book of Genesis. The forbidden tree of good and evil and the partaking of its fruit by Adam and Eve and the consequent fall, passion and perception gave the Elder James an archetypal image for every man's passion and perception through a tragic experience of evil. Elder James's observation that life flowers and fructifies out of the profoundest tragic depths is the finest expression of the passion and perception that a tragic story embodies. According to Elder James, Adam's fall and the fall of every son of Adam is essentially fortunate as it leads to an actual rise to the normal human level. For James "the plain old Adam" of Emerson with his "single genuine self against the whole world" is only a
sleek and comely character who must certainly fall to rise up with a perception of reality.

The protagonists of James are all tragic Adams. They learn the old truths all over again, on their own pulses, and through suffering. They begin their life in innocence. They are then proud, self-assured and adventurous. They aim too high and go far out into the world with a desire for total knowledge. But the world they create is shattered as they confront the evil that lies hidden in the enchanting world of Europe. The rupture of their illusion, their experience of deception and betrayal and the widening gulf between desire and achievement that they see fill their lives with passion. Yet, the protagonists of James not only survive their ordeal, but grow in maturity and self-knowledge.

What is so remarkable about Jamesian tragic fiction is the growth and awareness his protagonists achieve as a result of their passion and perception. Leon Edel states that "Awareness is made by James the very essence of life itself."10 The Jamesian innocents become fuller human beings as a result of their tragic experience and they return to life with a moral freedom they have never known before. What one becomes is far more important for James than anything one does or fails to do. In fact, denial, deprivation and defeat are conditions that make possible in the Jamesian world the growth and expansion of the human spirit. Man, James believes, as does any tragedian, achieves the
fullest growth of his soul, when he is crushed and crucified. Because of the perception that man attains in his moments of ordeal the Jamesian protagonist becomes triumphant in defeat, victorious in the personal moral ethos despite failure in the market places of the world.

We shall now see how the protagonists of the selected novels go through the final phases of their growth namely passion and perception.

Christopher Newman of *The American* suffers as he aims too high and goes too far. His attitude is similar to that of his namesake Christopher Columbus, the discoverer of America. With the impudence of a conqueror, Newman comes to Europe ambitious of coveting the most magnificent woman in the world. But, he is totally unmindful of the cultures and manners there. Again Newman very much resembles another of his namesake St. Christopher, the patron saint of ferry-boatmen. St Christopher transported travellers across water and Newman would have transported Claire and Valentin across the Atlantic to America. Newman then is the new American Adam, totally innocent and ignorant of evil. Noemie exclaims, "I don't understand how a man can be so ignorant." Pride and ignorance resulting from his innocence lead Newman to his fall. When Mrs. Tristram tells him "Now you have the whole world before you; you have only to enjoy" (AM.32), Newman believes her. He tells Valentin "I don't know what I have to lose, but I certainly have something to gain" (AM.89). Such
presumptuousness is something that even the gods do not like. Icarus was struck down because he flew close to the sun and Newman is brought down because of his impossible desires. As the shadows of his illusion are driven away by the stark light of reality, Newman tastes the bitter cup of suffering.

Evil is the root cause of all suffering. It is the evil that the villains perpetrate upon the protagonist by way of manipulation and treachery that prevents him from achieving his cherished desire and his failure in achieving his desires drives him into the dark alley of suffering and alienation where he gropes for a way out. Newman comes to Paris with a great desire to marry a splendid woman. Mrs. Tristram introduces him to Claire. Newman finds in Claire goodness, beauty, intelligence, a fine education, personal elegance—everything in a word that makes a splendid woman. In addition to that he finds that she is of noble birth and his dream is more than realized. When he learns from Mrs. Tristram that Claire was married to an old Duke at the age of eighteen for the sake of money by her "wicked mother" and "Grand Turk" (AM.71) of her brother and that now she is a widow leading a secluded life in the prison of her mother's house, pity for her is roused and when Mrs. Tristram advises him to flee to her rescue, Newman is more than willing to do so. He never bothers about the peculiarities of her Catholic religion; neither about the fact that she is the member of a noble family, nor about the numerous walls of culture and manners that separate them. He thinks that his money will cover all such differences and with the single-mindedness of a
military man, which he was earlier, he courts Claire. Though he sees some evidences of wickedness on Claire's old mother and elder brother, he ignores them and obtains from them on their word of honour their consent and support to his courting. Thus Newman takes the Bellegardes in his hands with his money. But, at the moment of his victory, after having introduced him to the important personalities of Paris as the prospective husband of Claire the Bellegardes show their malicious mind by going back on their promise and by arranging behind his back another marriage for Claire with Lord Deepmere, a distant English cousin of theirs, which Claire refuses. Newman receives a great blow to his pride and is plunged in great suffering.

Newman goes to the house of the Bellegardes to clear the fog of misunderstanding and if possible to change the mind of Claire. He feels as soon as he enters the house, that he is in the presence of something evil; he is startled and pained as he would have been by a threatening cry in the stillness of the night, as James picturesquely describes. Claire tells him "something very vague has happened . . . I can't marry you" (AM.219). Newman charges Urbain with having interfered in their affair. But he tells Newman that he has only used his authority. Claire clarifies it saying," My mother commanded . . . I am afraid of my mother" (AM.221). Newman understands that he is trapped in a wicked world where force and power are used to manipulate others. The explanation of the Bellegardes that they had only allowed him to court Claire and not to marry her confirm Newman's belief in their demoniac
nature. He rails at the old woman, "This sort of thing can't be, you know . . . . A man can't be used in this fashion. You have no right; you have got no power" (AM.223). The old woman's nonchalant answer "My power . . . is in my children's obedience" (AM.223) stupefies Newman. The behaviour of Claire and her helplessness drive home to him what the old woman means by her words. Claire makes an effort to take the whole blame on her shoulders and shield her family much to the dismay of Newman. He asks her, "why do you try to shield them? Why do you sacrifice me to them?" (AM.248). Claire's only answer is, "And now that I have given you up, I must not complain of her to you" (AM.248). Later she tells him, "What right have I to be happy when . . . others have been unhappy" (AM.249). Newman is totally disappointed and tells her" the feeling that your mother's looks are law and your brothers words are gospel . . . makes my blood boil" and striking his heart with his hand he tells her "what I feel here . . . is glowing fire!" (AM.251). Then Claire shares a secret with him that there is a curse upon the family and no one can escape from it. She explains, "We must all bear it . . . you offered me a great chance besides my liking you. It seemed good to change completely, to break, to go away . . . But I can't—it has overtaken and come back to me" (AM.251). Poor Newman torn asunder by the pang of frustration fails to understand Claire's strange words and charges her of heartlessness. Then Newman receives the rudest of all shocks when Claire tells him that she is going into a place "where I shall give no more pain and
suspect no more evil. I am going out of the world . . . . I am going into a convent" (AM.252). The idea strikes Newman as too dark and horrible for belief and makes him feel as if she had told him that she was going to mutilate her beautiful face, or drink some potion that would make her mad. The possible transformation of Claire in whom he has seen all human grace and household force into a Catholic nun muffled in ascetic rags and entombed in a cell becomes something inconceivable to him. As James comments "To see a woman made for him and for motherhood to his children juggled away in this tragic travesty—it was a thing to rub one's eyes over a nightmare, an illusion, a hoax" (AM.255).

The betrayal and the breach of promise of the Bellegardes have been beyond his wildest dreams. He had told Valentin before the so called "ball", "What should I be afraid of? You can't hurt me unless you kill me by some violent means" (AM.184). But, now he realises that the Bellegardes are capable of killing others by subtle means. Newman feels too stunned and wounded for consecutive action. He has a burning, tingling sense of personal outrage. He has never in his life received so absolute a check; he has never been pulled up, or let down and he finds the sensation intolerable; he strides along, tapping the trees and lamp posts fiercely with his stick and inwardly raging. To lose Claire after he has taken such a jubilant and triumphant possession of her, he feels, is as great an affront to his pride as it is an injury to his happiness. The feeling that he has lost Claire by the interference and
the dictation of others, by an old woman and a pretentious fop stepping in with authority rankles in his mind. He feels that even Claire has betrayed him by ignoring his deepest sentiments of love for her. Newman broods over with a shattered mind, "Only three days had elapsed since she stood before him in the star-light, beautiful and tranquil as the trust which he had inspired her, and told him that she was happy in the prospect of their marriage?" (AM.227). The change in Claire that has mercilessly brought his dream to the dust astounds and baffles him. He fears that Claire is irretrievably lost and that breaks his heart.

For a moment, his passion fills his mind with vengeful thoughts. He tells Mrs. Bread,

I am very angry, I am very sore, and I'm very bitter, but I don't know that I'm wicked . . . . I want to bring them down—down—down—down! I want to turn the tables upon them—I want to turn the tables upon them—I want to mortify them as they mortified me. They took me up into a high place and made me stand there for all the world to see me, and then they stole behind me and pushed me into this bottomless pit, where I lie howling and gnashing my teeth! I made a fool of myself before all their friends; but I shall make something worse of them (AM.267).
Mrs. Bread promises to help him and tells him how the old woman and her son had deliberately killed Marquis Bellegarde, as he opposed the unnatural marriage of Claire with the old man they had selected for her. Then she gives Newman the letter written by the dying Bellegarde which contained the message, "My wife has tried to kill me and she has done it, . . . . It's to marry my dear daughter to M. de Cintre. With all my soul I protest forbid it . . . . She attacked me and put me to death. It is murder, if murder ever was" (AM.280). Newman threatens to expose the old woman and her son with this incriminating letter but they first ignore it as a forged letter and later Urbain asks Newman not to blackmail them with that letter as it will only do damage to the good name of their dead father who wrote it in a demented state. Newman promises to destroy the letter if they allow Claire to marry him. But, Urbain doesn't relent and tells Newman he will rather allow Claire to become a nun than Mrs. Newman. Newman then approaches the Duchess, Madame de Outreville, the person whom the Bellegardes honour much, to bewail before her the treachery of the Bellegardes and to expose their horrible crime. But she divines his intention and with a cynical frivolity matching that of the Bellegardes never gives him a chance to open his mouth. Newman realises the futility of his exercise and decides to banish the wicked Bellegardes from his mind and never to think of them. He tells Mrs. Tristram, who had fanned his desire to marry Claire and who now pities him and asks him to cheer up, "I feel like a widower and a widower who has not even the
consolation of going to stand beside the grave of his wife—who has not the right to wear so much mourning as a weed in his hat. I feel... as if my wife had been murdered and her assassins were still at large" (AM.307). Newman goes away from Paris for some three months. He pays a visit to London and then to St. Francisco, his native town and finally comes back to Paris when he receives the letter of Mrs. Tristram informing him that Claire had taken the veil on her 27th birthday and that now she is Sr. Veronica. The fate of Sr. Veronica with a life time before her aches the wounded heart of Newman and he comes back to Paris to extort at least a sort of happiness by remaining close to the sepulchre where his darling is buried alive. The house of the Carmelites with its dull, plain edifice, with a high shouldered blank wall all round it presents before him an impenetrable wall. At the same time it gives him a strange satisfaction. The barren stillness of the place seems to be his own release from ineffectual longing. It tells him that the woman within is lost beyond recall, and that the days and years of the future will pile themselves above her like the huge immovable slab of a tomb. These days and years, in this place, will always be just so gray and silent. Earlier he had a desire to spend his whole life there but now Newman realises that it is gratuitous dreariness to stay there. Everything is over and he too at last can rest. Finally Newman turns away with a heavy heart, but with a heart lighter than the one he had brought. He decides to leave Paris for ever renouncing all thoughts of revenge.
Though it is the entombment of his most loved woman, Claire, in a
nunnery and his betrayal by the Bellegardes that pain Newman much, he is
also deeply touched by the sad death of his greatest friend Valentin whom he
had very much wished to save. Valentin has been just like a younger brother
to Newman and he has always been filled with admiration for him on account
of his candour and sense of humour. Newman has had a glorious dream about
Valentin as a successful banker in America but when such a gallant young
man of promise is driven to death by a heartless tart, Newman's pain knows
no bounds. In fact, the death of Valentin, through whom Newman has hoped
to clear his way out through the treachery of the Bellegardes and force Claire
to come back to him, upsets all his plans and fills his life with total darkness.

The heartless wickedness of Noemie and the hypocrisy of her father Niochi
also very much weigh down upon the heart of Newman. In fact, it is Noemie
who initiates Newman into the vain and wicked world of Paris. Newman, in
the beginning, takes her to be a wingless angel and endeavours to save her.
But, later he finds her to be a cruel sorceress, sucking the blood of the young
and the rich luring them into her net by her coquetry. She rejoices over the
death of Valentin in a duel as she thinks it will give her a push in her
profession. Later, Newman finds her sharing the intimacy of Lord Deepmere,
the man whom the Bellegardes very much wished to take his place as the
husband of Claire. Such heartlessness and wickedness fill Newman with
disgust and pain. Nioche, Noemie's old father, just like her, in the beginning,
impresses upon Newman as an honest, but helpless man. Newman is carried away by his long tales of woe and his great concern for his coquettish daughter. When Nioche tells him that he would rather kill her and himself than allow Noemie to have her wicked way, Newman finds in him an equal to himself. But, when the old man takes a helpless comfort in the fact his experience in business will be of great help to Noemie, when she falls into the business of selling herself, Newman's image of him is shattered into pieces giving him intolerable pain.

Newman in the novel, encounters evil and suffers excruciating pain. But that doesn't entitle him to the stature of a tragic hero. Unless he achieves perception all his suffering is a mere waste and he will extort only our pity and not admiration. James, immensely gifted with the genius of a tragedian, takes Newman to the crowning phase of perception. Newman, in the end of the story, walks into the realm of light which his perception provides him with, after his perilous journey through darkness. He gains in nobility and stature as he looks back into his life with a new perception sloughing off his old sleek Adamic features.

Newman's six months of stay in Europe, especially in Paris and his encounter with evil there as manifested through the Bellegardes and the Nioches open his eyes to reality. He had begun his exploration of Europe in innocence, devoid of a vision of evil. At that time he had even thought that
evil was non-existent and the world was a place suitable for unlimited growth and expansion. But now, with his life lying all in a shambles, he realises the folly of his earlier position. He is forced by the Bellegardes and the Nioches to realize that his view of existence has been too simplistic, quite inadequate to cope with the forms and taste of civilized society.

Every tragic hero is like the Gloucester of King Lear. He sees more as he is deprived of his sight. The loss of physical sight gives him the power of inner sight which enables him to see life and himself with greater clarity. As the light of awareness dawns upon the tragic hero, he experiences a great expansion of his consciousness. Newman also goes through such an experience. His consciousness which has hitherto been immature becomes mature with his experience of evil and suffering. For the possession of total knowledge it is very necessary to eat the fruit of the forbidden tree. Newman partakes of the fruit of the forbidden tree, loses his paradisiacal innocence, but gains the much required moral maturity. Suffering and the evil that produces it are necessary things, for it is the knowledge and the experience of these two that mature and perfect a human being. Newman would not have acquired the moral and spiritual refinement necessary for his final gesture of magnanimity without them. For James, life is a quest for purification and refinement. The exposure of James's heroes and heroines to evil undoubtedly involves the human individuality in pain and suffering, but the outcome, the refined consciousness, represents an ultimate victory. The refinement and growth of
consciousness that Newman achieves at the end of the story make him victorious in spite of all his losses and pains.

Isabel Archer of *The Portrait of a Lady* is a perfect picture of youthfulness. She is eager, presumptuous, vain but extremely intelligent and clever and therefore has a strong proneness to tragedy. Just like Newman she too goes too far and hitchs her waggon to the star. She is a typical American in her incorrigible romantic view of life and her idea of happiness, as she tells Henrietta her friend, is "a swift carriage, of a darknight, rattling with four horses over roads that one can't see." She is too very fond of her liberty and she tells Casper Goodwood, who proposes to her, "If there's a thing in the world I'm fond of . . . it's my personal independence . . . . I wish to choose my fate and know something of human affairs beyond what other people think compatible with propriety to tell me" (PL.1.228–229). She also possesses a ridiculously active imagination which renders her vulnerable to delusions and her fondness for knowledge and experience is also very commendable. In her confidence, at once innocent and dogmatic, Isabel regards the world as a place of brightness, of free expansion and of irresistible action. But, the sad thing about Isabel is that she is self deluded like any other tragic hero and is in need of an encounter with the real. She being unacquainted with evil and suffering, her tragic flaw is her naive self confidence which leads her to her downfall in a society of whose ruthlessness she has no more comprehension than Desdemona has of the motivation of Iago.
James shatters the illusory world of Isabel by taking her to the abyss of evil and suffering and then provides her with a perception of reality of herself and the world around her. In the beginning of the novel Isabel asks Ralph Touchett to show her the ghost of the Gardencourt, the hoary, ancestral house of her uncle, but Ralph tells her that she will not be able to see it as she has not yet experienced suffering. But at the end of the story Isabel does see the ghost of the Gardencourt by virtue of the great suffering she has endured en route. Thus in *The Portrait of a Lady* also James highlights his pet idea that only through passion can one come to perception. It is James's firm belief that moral maturity can be attained only by the partaking of the fruit of the Forbidden Tree and by drinking the poisoned cup of experience which drowns a person in the ocean of passion.

Isabel seems to be in the words of Ralph "soaring up in the blue to be sailing in the bright light over the heads of men" (PL.1.69), in the beginning of the novel especially with the rejection of two worthy suitors namely Casper Goodwood and Lord Warburton, who, she fears, will draw her into their own system and prevent her exploration of life. But a radical change comes over her life with the bequest of a huge sum of money made in her favour by her uncle at the request of Ralph. The aim of Ralph is to liberate Isabel from her pecuniary needs and make her "as free as a bird on the bough" (PL.1.315) as Mrs. Touchett observes. But, as feared by Mr. Touchett, Isabel's uncle, the
bequest makes her a victim of fortune hunters; Madame Merle and Gilbert Osmond allure Isabel by their mask of manners and social graces. Isabel takes Osmond to be a specimen apart with no system of his own. It is, in fact, Osmond's negative qualities that draw Isabel towards him. Isabel says that Osmond has, unlike Goodwood and Warburton, "no property, no title, no honours, no houses, nor lands, nor position, nor reputation, nor brilliant belongings of any sort. It is the total absence of all these things that please me" (PL.11.75). Ralph feels terribly let down by Isabel's decision to marry Osmond. He senses the banality of Osmond's person beneath his elegant exterior and he fears her hopes of a high destiny for her are going to be shattered. Envisaging the death of his dreams about her Ralph tells Isabel, "You must have changed immediately. A year ago you valued your liberty beyond everything" (PL.11.65). Isabel replies, "There's nothing higher for a girl than to marry a—a person she likes" (PL.11.70). When Ralph points out that Osmond is a snob and a sterile dilettante, Isabel retorts angrily, "You might know a gentleman when you see one—you might know a fine mind. Mr. Osmond makes no mistakes! He knows everything! He understands everything! He has the kindest, gentlest, highest spirit. You've got hold of some false ideas" (PL.11.73). Isabel is convinced that marriage with Osmond will help her remain completely disengaged to pursue the free exploration of life that her imagination dreams of. So in freedom, as she thinks, she chooses
to marry the man that has seemed to her the most uncommitted, the most unconcerned, the most disinterested, the most independent and the most free.

James passes over the first few years of Isabel's married life with Osmond. But with clever hints and skilful handling of the plot he indicates that those four years have been for Isabel years of education in the reality of life. Man learns only through suffering and Isabel too learns through her suffering, through the death of her dreams of a beautiful life of unlimited growth and freedom with Osmond. Life with Osmond disillusioned Isabel and she realises the man whom she has adored is just a villain greedy for her wealth and tyrannically desirous of the submission of her will, freedom and everything. Isabel laments as her ideal image of Osmond breaks into pieces, "Oh Gilbert, for a man who was so fine!" (PL.11.276). But, Isabel who is proud, who values the importance of her marital vows, never allows anybody to see her disappointment or suffering. She tries her best to conform to the desire of her husband and to represent him in everything. In that effort, she misrepresents herself, yet she persists in being a good wife to him. Thus Isabel reduces herself into an object d'art, full of gloss, but no life within. So, it is quite fitting that James presents her for the first time after her marriage through the eyes of Edward Rosier in terms of a portraiture: "framed in the gilded doorway she struck our young man as the picture of a gracious lady" (PL.11.105). Goodwood finds it very difficult to penetrate the outer walls of her appearance and says, "I can't understand, I can't penetrate you ... you are
completely changed. You conceal every thing" (PL.11.318). But Henrietta, her friend makes a correct assessment of her situation, "You're like the stricken deer, seeking the innocent shade. Oh, you do give me such a sense of helplessness!" (PL.11.303). Ralph who meets Isabel in Rome after she has settled down to the sad rhythm of married life is agonized over the change wrought in her. He sadly realizes that she is no longer a free and uninhibited person who administers to her own inner needs. She appears to him to have succumbed to the worldly views of her husband, and acquired a formal and false persona. Isabel strikes him as a travesty of her earlier self. In short, Ralph sees through her mask of serenity and contentment and finds that the fine lady represents her husband, her wings clipped and her spirit in captivity.

Isabel realises the tragic condition of her life very vividly in the great vigil scene which is triggered off by her quick insight into the deeper intimacy between Madame Merle and Gilbert Osmond. In her night-long vigil she reflects in general about the failure of her hopes and in particular about Osmond's vanity and how he stultified her freedom.

What first emerges from Isabel's analysis of the failure of her marriage is the real character of Gilbert Osmond. He has indeed turned out to be a man very different from Isabel's first conception of him. In Osmond she thought to have found her Eden. He was to be the new Adam of a new civilization, and she its Eve. She had intended the lofty, the fullest expression of her self in
the service of a high civilization. But, Isabel finds him to be a brute: morally coarse to the last fibre: cold hearted; apparently egotistical and capable of acts of calculated violence that have a power to terrify far exceeding that of mere physical acts of violence. Osmond makes everything he touches wither, spoils everything for Isabel by his looks. It is as if he has the evil eye, as if his presence is a blight and his favour a misfortune. The knowledge of how completely and cruelly she has been deceived induces in Isabel a condition of utter wretchedness.

Marriage with Osmond becomes a hell for Isabel and she finds herself trapped in a dungeon. "The four walls ... were to surround her for the rest of her life," (PL.11.196) a dark, claustral dwelling in which she is spied upon from above by a jailor—"Osmond's beautiful mind indeed seemed to peep down from a small high window" (PL.11.96). The house of Osmond appears to Isabel as a house of darkness, dumbness and suffocation. Isabel finally realises the nature of her offence. "The real offence ... was her having a mind of her own at all. Her mind was to be his—attached to his own like a small garden plot to a deer park" (PL.11.200). Thus Isabel finds Osmond to be a tyrant. His egotistic love of authority truly grinds Isabel in what Ralph calls "the very mill of the conventional" (PL.11.415). Osmond demands obedience in small things as well as great. She doesn't want Isabel to have any other opinion than his own. Her reluctance to surrender her mind to Osmond, to suspend her judgement of his moral nature is a major source of tension in their
life together. Isabel's independence, yearning for experience, and moral purity are American qualities clearly against Osmond's repression and unclean mind.

Isabel reaches another important stage of her education through passion and perception when it comes to sending away Pansy in marriage. To her great surprise Isabel finds that Merle is as much as or more interested than Osmond himself to find a proper match for Pansy. Both of them deny the suit of Edward Rosier, a worthy gentleman whom Pansy loves ardently, just because they feel that he is not rich enough for her. They ardently wish Warburton to marry Pansy and they coax and cajole Isabel to use her influence on him to win him for Pansy. Isabel takes some interest in the match, but when she realises that Warburton's intention is to remain close to her under the pretext of courting Pansy, Isabel makes an indirect appeal to his good sense and he leaves Rome for good. Both Osmond and Madame Merle take great offence as they feel that she has betrayed their trust in her. Osmond tells her, "you've played a very deep game; you've managed it beautifully" (PL.11.273). The fury of Merle and her query "Don't you know I had set my heart on it?" (PL.11.321) shock and surprise Isabel. She gets yet another insight into the true nature of Merle. She suddenly fears that Merle has been a powerful agent in her destiny and she feels herself waking from a pernicious dream with a strange truth filtering into her soul—"Madame Merle's interest was identical with Osmonds" (PL.11.323). Later, when Merle tells her that
Osmond is terribly displeased with her and that they should go after Warburton if he has left Rome on her request, Isabel finds her to be terribly disagreeable. The thought that her husband has dishonoured her in words and in his thoughts in front of another woman and that he takes that woman in confidence against her deeply wounds Isabel and she asks Merle in horror, "Who are you,—what are you? What have you to do with my husband . . . . What have you to do with me?" (PL.11.326–327). The wicked Merle then takes away her mask of sophistication and murmurs, "Everything" (PL.11.327), and Isabel gets the terrible realisation in a flash. She cries "Oh misery!" (PL.11.327) and falls back covering her face with her hands. It comes over her like a high surging wave that Mrs. Touchet was right when she told her that Madame Merle had married her.

Isabel gets almost a full realisation of her tragic situation when Countess Gemini, the sister of Osmond unravels before her the whole truth about Osmond and Merle. Gemini finds Isabel one day very sad and learns from her that Ralph is dying in England and her husband forbids her from being at his bed side. Gemini feels pity for Isabel and reveals to her the horrible manipulation and treachery Osmond has been practising on her with the aid of Madame Merle. She also advises Isabel that she need not be scrupulous in obeying a husband who is all rotten inside. Osmond is an arch villain incapable of loving any one, Gemini says. She tells Isabel the horrible truth that Osmond's wife died childless and that Pansy is his child born to
Merle. Osmond and Merle had been lovers and they could not marry as they were poor. But there existed a secret pact between them to help each other and the marriage of Isabel with Osmond was the result of a plot between them. The aim of Merle in marrying Isabel to Osmond was to provide a loving and munificent mother to her daughter. The revelations of Gemini shock Isabel. She realises that she has been used, manipulated and betrayed. She feels an immense desire to see Ralph and tells Gemini in great pain. "Ah, I must see Ralph... in a tone of far reaching infinite sadness" (PL.11.373).

Before her departure to England Isabel feels an urge to bid goodbye to Pansy. She goes to the convent where she has been put by Osmond to give her the finishing touches. There she meets Merle who has also come to see Pansy, her daughter who does not know her to be her mother. Pansy rather hates her and derives no pleasure from her company. Isabel is rather surprised to see Merle of whose falsity and audacity she has been thinking of all that day. Merle exchanges some pleasantries with Isabel but soon realises that Isabel is in possession of the whole truth about her. The most accomplished of women begins to falter and lose her courage in front of Isabel. Her voice suddenly breaks and she loses the continuity of her speech. As Merle is thoroughly stripped of her pretences, Isabel experiences a feeling of triumph. At the same time the consciousness of the fact that she has been used as a pawn for Merle's selfish gains surges into Isabel's soul. Isabel never entertains a thought of taking revenge on Merle and remains silent for
sometime and then tells her she is leaving for England as Ralph is dying. Isabel then meets Pansy and promises never to desert her and she even tells her that she will come back to see her. On her return Isabel again sees Merle and then she tells Isabel the secret that it was Ralph who had made her rich and "at bottom it's him you've to thank" (PL.11.388). Isabel is surprised. "She seemed to live in a world illumined by lurid flashes"(PL.11.388). She gives a fitting reply to Merle who has tried to put the responsibility of her disaster on to the shoulder of Ralph, "I believed it was you I had to thank!" (PL.11.389). Then the predator and the prey separate never to meet again; the predator Merle to America bereft of all hopes and the prey Isabel to England sad but enlightened.

Isabel's visit to Gardencourt after a long gap of six years fills her mind with all kinds of thoughts. Gardencourt has been a starting point and her return to the place gives her a feeling of relief. She had gone forth from Gardencourt in her strength but now she is back there in her weakness and if the place had been a rest to her before, it will be a sanctuary for her now. She wanders alone through the great drawing room and library, then on to the deserted gallery of pictures, pausing to admire all the fine objects and works of art, which only grow more beautiful and valuable with time. Things change but little, she reflects, while people change so much. In the six long years that have passed nothing has changed but Isabel. Yet once more she meditates on her tragic career. She might have had another life, and today she
might have been a happier woman. Isabel then meets her dying cousin. It is a
beautiful and tender scene. Suffering brings them together and melts away all
incomprehensions between them and they look at the truth together. Isabel
confesses the tragic failure of her marriage—Osmond's villainy, her own
suffering—and her blindness to Ralph's love. Ralph at last drops the pretence
of cousinly devotion, so long maintained because of his feeling that an invalid
should not aspire to be her husband. Now it is confided to her in his last
words which are just barely audible: "And remember this . . . that if you have
been hated you have also been loved" (PL.11.417). Isabel can only cry in
disbelief of what might have been, "Oh, my brother!" (PL.11.417). Though
nothing more is stated, what is evoked by the whole scene is the vision of the
life they might have had together, at least for a few years. Ralph tells Isabel
"You wanted to look at life for yourself—but you were not allowed; you were
punished for your wish. You were ground in the mill of the conventional"
(PL.11.415); and after a while he consoles her saying, "I don't believe that
such a generous mistake as yours can hurt you for more than a little"
(PL.11.417). He also advises Isabel never to wish for death, "Dear Isabel, life
is better; for in life there's love. Death is good—but there's no love"
(PL.11.414). Ralph who had wished to see Isabel soar to the highest regions
finally surrenders his soul with the painful realisation that his generosity had
been the cause of Isabel's destruction. But the suffering Isabel has endured
has not been in vain. It leads her to a higher realm of perception. In her days
of innocence Isabel had a great desire to see the ghost of Gardencourt and now, after having gone through the shattering experience of suffering, she sees the ghost of Gardencourt, a holy rather than a Gothic ghost.

Isabel faces the final ordeal of her life when her old lover, Caspar Goodwood, tempts her with the offer of a new life. Ralph is dead and buried and Isabel broods over her life one evening on a rustic bench under an oak tree in Gardencourt and then there comes before her Caspar Goodwood with his old passionate appeal. He makes a strong profession of love, "Trust me as if I had the care of you. Why shouldn't we be happy? . . . I'm yours for ever—for ever and ever". He continues a little later, "Where we born to rot in our misery ... The world's all before us—and the world's very big" (PL.11.434–435). Isabel who had such a belief in her phase of innocence, now tells him after having had her tryst with evil and passion, "The world's very small" (PL.11.435). At the same time his offer thrills her for a moment and she even allows him to embrace her. But, then the realisation dawns on her that she cannot surrender to the physical world Goodwood offers as it would be a denial of the conscience she has gained through her suffering. So, she decides to return to Rome, to her husband, not in weakness, but in the strength of her illumination of the realities of life. That's why critics like David Daiches see Isabel's return to Osmond as an adequate exhibition of her strength, "Isabel Archer having made the initial—though cumulative—moral error, which results in her unhappy marriage, justifies and redeems herself
morally by her decision to return to her husband and abide by her earlier idea of marriage in spite of the fact that her husband for his part does not represent the ideal.13

Through the story of Isabel James reiterates his pet notion that if man comes to understanding and a fuller vision of life through suffering, it is better that he suffers. Man is innocent in his initial phase of life and hence ignorant of the realities of life. He needs to have experience which only an encounter with evil can provide him with. Man may get bruised and scarred in his encounter with evil but it is not capable of breaking him. On the contrary trials and suffering strengthen him and arm him further with knowledge. Isabel gains through her encounter with evil the lucidity of wisdom and combines now the faculty of judging with that of merely seeing. In proportion as Isabel grows rich in suffering, a moral beauty is born. Isabel learns a lot through her suffering. First of all, she comes to believe like Ralph that suffering is the necessary condition of being fully human. The suffering that Isabel endures liberates her from her earlier ignorance and presumptuousness. She also gains an insight into human nature and an awareness of man's predicament in a hostile world of evil, of conventions and traditions, of superficial manners and treacheries. Isabel ultimately creates a set of moral values to replace the unshaped and vulnerable idealism of her youth. Her return to her fiendish husband is a result of her new moral values which she gains in the process of suffering. Isabel is thus a classic example of a vision
won out of a great personal tragedy. Like a Shakespearean protagonist she earns cognition after paying a fearful price. In short, Isabel comes to light after passing through the darkness of evil and suffering.

Through Milly Theale in *The Wings of the Dove* James presents the story of man's great powers for adventure and achievement enacted under the shadow of mortality. Milly is a young American maiden "passionately desiring to 'put in' before extinction as many of the finer vibration as possible and so achieve, however briefly and brokenly, the sense of having lived."¹⁴ She is the heiress of a vast fortune and the only survivor of a once large family. She is an unassuming pale beauty but endowed with a peculiar inner resistance and an overpowering desire for life; like Isabel, she possesses a strong and special love of liberty, liberty of action, of choice, of appreciation and of contact. The future seems to loom bright before her but from the start she knows that she is doomed to experience a multitude of things within a short span of time.

Though Milly displays a great lust for life, she is as innocent and devoid of a vision of evil as Christopher Newman or Isabel Archer. According to James the life of a man becomes full and heroic only with an expansion of consciousness which one gains with an experience of evil and suffering. Mere physical suffering and isolation which have been Milly's lot as a result of a dreaded disease that has wiped out all the members of her
family, are not capable of giving Milly the required knowledge and perception for a fuller life. Perception comes to one only through the suffering one undergoes as a result of an experience of evil. So evil is an antidote to innocence and it is something necessary; it devastates man and at the same time sharpens and strengthens his soul. James, to give Milly, an experience of the world and thereby to replace her moral innocence with moral and social maturity takes her to Europe. We see her sitting at the dizzy edge of the Alpine cliff and looking at the kingdoms of the earth. Again, she is like Newman and Isabel at the outset of her foreign jaunt, with all the world lying before her to choose whatever she likes. And Milly chooses, of all the kingdoms, London, for her education. What she finds attractive in London is not its scenery or museums but "the human and personal"(WD.93) element there. She is prepared to immerse herself totally in the fluctuating and entangling complexity of human relations and to take full in the face of the whole assault of life.

Thus Milly comes to London seeking life and experience. What she expects to get from there is normal human dealings and love and concern. But, the Lancaster Gate of Maud Lowder where Susan takes Milly into is a world of rapacity and ruthlessness. The rapacity and the restlessness of the Lancastrians are not anything distinct from the charm, intelligence and civility in which their land abounds. Or, the contrary, they are so inseparably bound up with each other that it is difficult for the victims to recognise the rapacity
and ruthlessness in the charm, the intelligence and the brilliance; and being unable so much as to recognise them, they are of course left helpless against this destructive power. Milly is pitted against such a wicked world for her education through suffering. At first her position is not unlike that of the child who, born into a securely founded cultural world, must try to find the key to its accepted practice. Being innocent Milly's first reaction to such a world is one of great exhilaration and everything there appeals to her imagination. "She had never been . . . in such a state of vibration" and she feels happy "to have made their pilgrimage all for the sake of such society" (WD.99). But Milly slowly understands the finely balanced tensions of social relationships and the pressures in particular the economic to which the individual in such a society is exposed.

Milly, though she finds herself a cynosure of all eyes in London, gets fed up with it as she realises that the people there do not love her for what she is but for what she has and this realisation alienates her and makes her sad. Milly finds that her London friends think too much of money and envy her good luck, which is nothing but her great inheritance. The hollow admiration of the Lancastrians and their praise slowly cease to give any consolation to Milly and they rather greatly disappoint her. What Milly thirsts for is genuine fellow feeling and love but what she gets is wily smiles and high flown titles like "princess", "moneyed darling" and "dove." Thus money as for Isabel becomes a great curse for Milly also. Aunt Maud, her impoverished but
handsome niece Kate and the stupid Lord Mark make their own designs to make use of Milly and win her money. Though Milly is not fully aware of their motives, she makes no effort to win their sympathy by exposing the dreaded state of her health. She does not even name her disease before them and lives as she tells Susan, "Since I've lived all these years as if I were dead, I shall die, no doubt, as if I were alive" (WD.127). On another occasion she tells Kate, "I think I could die without it being noticed" (WD.141).

Milly is painfully made aware of her mutability during her visit to the house of Lord Mark at Matcham. Lord Mark takes her to the picture of a lady who very much resembles her. Milly studies the portrait of the lady with tears in her eyes. Milly realises that despite all her beauty and charm the lady in the portrait is "unaccompanied by joy" and is "dead, dead, dead" (WD.137). The portrait reminds Milly of the transitory nature of human life which she, in a very peculiar way, shares with the rest of humanity. She, too, would soon be reduced to a portrait. But before that, she longs to experience the fullness of life.

James penetrates with psychological depth the relation between Milly's delicate vitality and her will to live through the probing questions Dr. Luke, the famous London physician, puts to her. His questions and assurances make Milly see herself as she really is and enable her to build up her life on a strong terrain of reality. Milly conceals nothing from her doctor. She exposes herself
in order to discover herself and to absorb the fact of her irremediable loneliness and responsibility which she sees without self-pity or under pathos: "one's situation is what it is. It's me it concerns. The rest is delightful and useless. Nobody can really help." (WD.148). Milly tells her doctor, "I like you to see me just as I am" (WD.148) and Sir Luke does just that. He takes Milly as she is. He avoids any direct medical issues and tells Milly that she can decide to live because the question is no longer one of physical survival for her but of defeating death by consciously seizing every chance of happiness that life still offers her. Sir Luke knows that love is the only curative for Milly and it alone can release the tension of her loneliness. But he can only suggest that; it is upto Milly to live her life. Sir Luke does what he can do to the utmost. He gives her confidence and goads her urge to love.

Milly leaves the doctor's office knowing that her situation is grave, but buoyed up by his sympathy and his challenges, "You've the right to be happy. You must make up your mind to it" (WD.149). She walks out into the surrounding world of London, and discovers in that grey immensity that her personal fate is also the world's fate. It brings a strange hope and zest, under the shadow of annihilation—a "military posture" and a new daunting "freedom" in exchange for the old "freedom" of health and safety. Milly has preserved her will and her freedom by deciding to join all her intrinsic energies and spiritual creativity to whatever her destiny has in store for her. She takes possession of the full remnant of her life through having entered into
possession of her death. But after walking for some time across London to celebrate the idea of a great adventure, Milly's mood shifts as she enters the Regent's Park. She now feels a sense of sharing more than before on the general human lot. There she sees wanderers anxious and tired like herself. Milly feels that everyone is saying just like her, "One could live if one would," but she modifies it a little later as "one would live if one could" (WD.156). With this, Milly touches the nadir of her hopes. Thus, Milly, by confronting her private destiny in Sir Luke's back room, and her destiny as one of the whole race of human wanderers in Regent's Park, now returns to the life that awaits her in Lancaster Gate and elsewhere.

What totally shatters the world of Milly is the kind of experience she confronts in her relation with Merton Densher, whom she loves. Milly comes to Europe to find people and experience life, especially to find Densher and experience his love or in other words to find and experience Europe through Densher and his love. If she is to accept the challenge to live, it is very necessary for her to acknowledge her secret love for Densher. Love is an alchemy that changes man and makes him vulnerable to evil and deception. Newman and Isabel change and grow into mature persons as they go through the pangs of love and are finally betrayed. It fills their life with darkness but the suffering they endure as a result of their thwarted or treacherous love brings them to a perception of reality about themselves in particular and human life in general. Milly is also crushed by her love of Densher who
betrays her with his deceptive love. But the suffering that she endures brings out the beauty in her character and makes her triumphant in her defeat. In fact, Milly, like any other tragic protagonist, goes too far in her lust for life and is punished.

Milly gets acquainted with Densher during his journalistic assignments in New York. Milly receives him thrice in her house and she promises to meet him in England. Milly in her stricken state of isolation and bereavement develops a silent passion for Densher though he takes it to be only a good acquaintance. When Milly decides to go straight to London, Susan reminds her of her old promise to Densher. But, Milly is very much reluctant to acknowledge her love for Densher openly and tells Susan that the last thing she desires is the air of running after Densher. But, she is rather surprised and shocked to know from Susan later that Densher is an acquaintance of Maud and he is involved in some way with Kate which Maud or the family of Kate does not approve of. Susan realises as a result of her probing questions that Milly is in love with Densher and she sees a labyrinth in the fact both Milly and Kate have been trying to conceal from each other their relationship with Densher. Milly also sees in it an abyss and declares "I want abysses" (WD.120). The relationship with Densher certainly pushes Milly into the abyss of darkness. She knows that she is no match for the handsome Kate with her vitality and talent for life. She looks at Kate sadly thinking, "it was a face on which Mr. Densher's eyes had more or less familiarly rested and
which by the same token, had looked, rather more beautifully than less, into his own" (WD.121). Milly feels her world shattering all around her. But the words of Maud that "she (Kate) does not care for him" (WD.162) and the bitter opposition of Mrs. Candrip, Kate's sister, to her marrying a poor man like Densher give her hope. But that hope also does not sustain her for long. Quite accidentally, Milly sees Densher and Kate exchanging loving glances at each other when they meet in the National Gallery immediately after Densher's arrival in England from New York. Milly then effaces herself and saves the situation by taking them both to her house for lunch. But, Milly is thrown into a world of make-believe and deception after her doctor's visit to Susan. Susan informs Aunt Maud about the precarious condition of Milly and tells her that only Densher can save her. Kate also comes to know about it. Maud sees that she will be able to marry Kate to Lord Mark if Densher and Milly are brought together. Kate thinks that she will be able to defeat the plan of Maud for her if she encourages Densher to act as the lover of Milly. She also hopes that as Milly is soon to die she will be able to marry Densher and lead a wonderful life with Milly's money. So, Susan, Maud and Kate make Milly believe that Densher is an unrequited lover and she is free to love him. So, Milly takes Densher with her when she goes to stay in Venice in a beautiful palace according to the advice of her doctor. Densher remains very passive and silent in the initial phase of his relationship with Milly and Milly takes it to be only as a sign of his unrequited love for Kate. She leads him on
the way, consoles him and assures him of her love for him. Milly even one
day forces him to invite her to his room. But, as every thing is going on rather
smoothly, in spite of her poor health, the worst blow is struck by Lord Mark.
He divulges the secret to Milly that Kate and Densher are engaged to be
married and Densher only pretends to love her with an eye on her money.
Milly is instantly struck down by passion and perception. She sees the
immensity of the betrayal practised on her by all and loses her will to live and,
as Susan says, turns her face to the wall. James, in fact, sums up the suffering
of Milly which leads her to a higher knowledge about herself and the world
around her in this small sentence of Susan. Milly at first refuses to see any
one including Densher. But after the visit of her doctor she invites Densher.
She requests him to leave Venice and to leave her alone to her suffering.
Densher is deeply affected by everything especially after Milly's death. Thus,
as David writes, "Milly's small but real act of love penetrates and destroys
Densher's private theaters of desire; and to destroy it was to destroy
everything, to destroy probably Kate herself."¹⁵

The suffering of Milly is to a very great extent reflected through the
suffering and isolation of Densher in his quarters in London. After his visit to
Milly he goes back to London with a feeling of having been forgiven,
dedicated and blessed. He stays there alone only with the thoughts of Milly as
his companion. He even ignores Kate. She comes to him and to her great
surprise finds that Densher is in love with Milly's memory. She burns the
letter that Milly has written to him before her death but opens with great eagerness the cover that contains her bequest. Densher, who has been purified in the fire of Milly's divine love for him, asks Kate to choose either himself or the inheritance of Milly but not both. Kate realises that they can never be again as they were before. What she wants is both Densher and Milly's money and never an impoverished Densher; she would rather prefer money and not Densher. So, they separate; Kate totally lost in her world of materialism and Densher totally liberated from its lure with his spirit asserting supremacy. And Milly, the dove, spreads her wings, and covers him, finally becoming victorious over her defeat. Thus the meaning of the dove changes as Daniel observes "from innocence and vulnerability to transcendence and triumph"\textsuperscript{16} and Densher has consciously to recall "that doves have wings and wondrous flights, have them as well as tender tints and soft sounds" (WD.304).

Louis Lambert Strether of The Ambassador is also crushed in the mill of life like Christopher Newman, Isabel Archer and Milly Theale before he attains perception about himself and the world around him. Strether in his life faces a grave conflict between two radically different systems of morality; one represented by Mrs. Newsome of America and the other by Madame de Vionnet of Paris. He confronts the evil inherent in both the systems and acquires moral maturity, though in the process he goes through much suffering.
Strether suffers on account of what he has missed in the puritan New England and also on account of what he learns ultimately from the cosmopolitan Paris. He strongly feels that he has missed to live though he has grown into a ripe old man of fifty five. His early marriage has been tragic, both his wife and son having died a few years after it. Ever since that he has been associated with Mrs. Newsome, a widow and a business tycoon, who is the uncrowned queen of New England conscience. The New England conscience has emotionally stunted Strether and has warped his personality. The moment he sets foot on European soil, he experiences a new sense of life before which his past life in Woollett in the company of Mrs. Newsome, his prospective wife, shows up as poverty stricken. Strether comes to see that in too much judging he has missed his life. With repeated emphasis he calls it his mistake, which is the mistake of Woollett, Massachusetts. Paris, and its rich social and aesthetic life converts Strether to the creed of life and he believes that the cup of life must be drained to its very dregs in order that he might come to the full realization of life though it involves suffering. He is also intensely made aware of his lost opportunities and he bursts out with a broken heart in the form of a piece of loving advice to Bilham, in the episode of Gloriani's garden party, "Live all you can; it's a mistake not to. It doesn't so much matter what you do in particular, so long as you have your life." Strether is sad to realize that his feeling of inadequacy, helplessness, personal failure, the inability to enjoy life and insecurity bordering on fear, particularly
fear of woman, are all due to his Woollett breeding. For James, the greatest tragedy that can befall a man is the denial of opportunity for growth and expansion and Strether is plunged in sorrow as he looks back into the barrenness of his life.

In the novel Strether passes through winding passages of darkness and light to a realisation of more things than had been dreamt of in the philosophy of Woollett. What happens to Strether is that he is thoroughly emancipated from the dreadful little old tradition of New England. He finds himself in Paris in a false position and is shocked, pained and finally relieved to see the approved pattern of a moral scheme he has brought with him from Woollett breaking down in front of his liberal appreciation of things and persons in Paris. In fact, it is the capacity for liberal appreciation which distinguishes Strether from the rest of the Woollett clan. Woollett thinks that Paris is a wicked and immoral place where people's moral scheme does break down and accordingly Mrs. Newsome, Sarah her daughter and Waymarsh and others strongly believe that as Chad lingers in Paris he must be involved with a woman and the involvement must be sordid and the woman vulgar. But Strether, who now believes in the dictum, "The proof of the pudding's in the eating" (AMB.351) is bowled over by the changes that Paris and Madame de Vionnet have brought in Chad. Strether notices tremendous improvement in the young man's appearance. Instead of being coarse by the process of sowing his wild oats, he seems of unexceptional tastes and manners, even of a dignity
which can affect the old man with a kind of awe. Chad has simply been made over and the fact prepares Strether to believe that his attachment with Madame de Vionnet is virtuous. As a good American he likes nothing better than to contemplate the spectacle of a changed man, someone transfigured by culture and experience. So Stretcher writes to Mrs. Newsome about the changed situation in Paris and the beneficent changes that have come over Chad under the influence of Madame de Vionnet, who, as opposed to the Woollett notion, is a charming woman with a virtuous character. The response of Mrs. Newsome to his letter is a long silence. She ceases to write to him as he has failed to return Chad to the bosom of Woollett. The silence of Mrs. Newsome falls heavily upon Strether crushing him each minute and it strikes him that he has "never so lived with her as during this period of her silence" (AMB.238). This silence, more than any thing else, expresses her to him—"so highly, so almost austerely, 'cold' but deep, devoted, delicate, sensitive, noble" (AMB.238). Strether feels that Mrs. Newsome has failed to understand him and she judges him as a betrayer of her cause. Her decision to replace him with Sarah as her emissary grieves him much. Anticipating Sarah's arrival in Paris he even contemplates a return to Woollett in guilt-ridden images of juvenile correction: "He saw himself under her direction, recommitted to Woollett as juvenile offenders are committed to reformatories" (AMB.246). Sarah then, as expected by Strether, bursts upon the scene like a shell blowing him up into pieces. She is far less sophisticated
than her mother but essentially a faithful embodiment of her mother's attitude. She accuses Strether bitterly for having turned his back on Mrs. Newsome and Woollett and gone over to the enemy. She positively loathes every thing Strether stands for. The woman Strether calls "... charming and ... beneficent" (AMB.348) Sarah refuses to consider "even an apology for a decent woman" (AMB.349). She finds Chad's development under Madame de Vionnet's influence not "fortunate" (AMB.351) as Strether urges her, but "hideous" (AMB.352) and their life together not a thing on can even speak of. Strether's despairing exclamation. "Oh, if you take that–!" is completed for him by Sarah with, "Then all's at an end?" (AMB.352). The moral absolutism and prejudiced vision of both Mrs. Newsome and her daughter, Sarah, make them blind to the beauty and charm of Paris and this becomes a cause of great woe for Strether.

The grasping and licentious way in which the Woollett folk like Waymarsh, Sarah and her husband Jim behave in Paris deeply dissays and saddens Strether. Mrs. Newsome may be as invulnerable as some iceberg in a northern sea but when her compatriots reach Paris they instantly melt. Sarah Pocock and Waymarsh, New Englanders in the real tradition enjoy, their "romance" together, affected by the charged infectious air of the classic ground and the great temple of pleasure which Paris is to them. Not to mention Jim Pocock, who full of "innuendo as vague," Strether feels, "as a nursery rhyme, yet as suggestive as an elbow in his side" (AMB.266) slyly
envies Strether for having one more good time before it is too late and who spends his days sniffing up what he supposes to be Paris. Jim has his New England categories in hand and despite his chummy sympathy for what he thinks of as Strether's and Chad's philandering, is therefore no less blind than the other—stupid or willful as they strike Strether, in their inability to see Madame de Vionnets' real qualities. In accord with the Woollett view of Paris as the playground of errand husbands, Jim leaves the moral side of the adventure to his wife to the extent even of calling on Madame de Vionnet all alone at a time when Sarah makes no bones about what she thinks of "the person" and of "that sort of thing." And Strether indeed realizes that he would have been held less monstrous had he only been a little wilder.

The Woollett tribe exemplify in their various ways what James calls the passionless pilgrims among the Americans, who regarded Europe as a toy to be used and discarded at will. Strether finds to his great surprise that even Chad whom he admires and holds up as a person ennobled by the Parisian influence, ultimately turns out to be one among them and this realization is a severe blow to him and a great step in his education through passion. As it becomes clear to Strether that Chad is only an unscrupulous victimizer and a base fornicator, Strether, who has originally come out to save Chad from Madame de Vionnet now admonishes him, "you'll be a brute, you know—you'll be guilty of the last infamy—if you ever forsake her" (AMB.425). Strether realizes that if Chad is going to cart off his gilded
holiday toy it is not because of any European corruption. It is quite on the contrary, because in spite of all that Madame de Vionnet, may have done for him, he is still nonetheless only Chad, a low, mean, puritan predator. In the end Strether is completely disillusioned in regard to Chad. To Strether's appeal not to be disloyal to Madame de Vionnet, Chad three times denies that he is tired of her and acknowledges he owes her everything but to Strether's new critical ears he spoke of being tired of her as he might have spoken of being tired of roast mutton for dinner. Further Chad betrays before he parts with him, that he has more than toyed with the idea of going into the advertising end of the Newsome business. Maria Gostrey completes Strether's disillusion with the young man whom he had once very much wished to be like: "And is your idea," Maria Gostrey asked, "that there was some other woman in London?"—Yes: No. That is, I have no idea... I've done with them" (AMB.437).

The horrible realisation of Strether that he has been plotted against by Chad and Madame de Vionnet with the willing connivance of Bilham and the unwilting support of Maria Gostrey plunges him in great sorrow. All along, Strether finds that there has been a conscious effort to deceive him regarding the true state of relationship between Chad and Madame de Vionnet. According to Bilham their relationship has been one of virtuous attachment, a case of pure platonic love. Maria Gostrey judges their relationship to be innocent. Chad openly tells Strether that his relationship with Madame de
Vionnet is something unreproachable and Madame de Vionnet is always evasive and tells Strether to judge her on the basis of what she has done for Chad. But, Strether stumbles upon the truth of their relationship after his disastrous scene with Sarah which seals his rupture with the Woollett tribe. Going down one day to a river-side resort near Paris, Strether is astonished to discover Chad and Madame de Vionnet floating in a row boat. Jeanne, Madame de Vionnets' daughter is not with them and the pair are unmistakably alone, and there is every evidence that they have planned to spend the night at the river-side inn. Strether now perceives with a shock the whole idea of "virtuous attachment" has been an eye-wash to deceive him.

The deception of Chad and Madame de Vionnet greatly bruises the heart of Strether, but what gives him the utmost pain is the rejection and betrayal of Madame de Vionnet by Chad. Strether pays a visit to Madame de Vionnet after his discovery of the true nature of her relationship with Chad thinking that she would try to make her deception right with her clever and enchanting words. But, quite contrary to his expectation, he sees with a great shock that the woman whose deep beauty is the main cause of his new vision is after all not proof against defeat and pain. He is amazed to find that she should be "down in the dust" and "put there by our little Chad" (AMB.420). James describes touchingly the feeling of Strether at the pathetic sight of Madame de Vionnet, "it was like a child in the air to him, it was almost appalling that a creature so fine could be, by mysterious forces, a creature so
exploited" (AMB.408). What shocks Strether is his profound vision of the common human weakness. For Strether, Madame de Vionnet is yet another Cleopatra enslaved by her abysmal and pitiful passion for Chad and he describes her as a pitiful creature: "as vulgarly troubled... as a maid servant crying for her young man" (AMB.409). The ravaged Madame de Vionnet diminished by her love of Chad also reminds Strether of Madame Roland and the guillotine, images which represent for Strether French elegance and the tragic French passion. Thus Strether sees what Woollett in its idealism refuses to see: the amount of sheer sacrifice; the blood and tears, entailed in the perpetuation of any culture worth the name. Madame de Vionnet, just for this reason, remains in the mind of Strether as "the finest and subtlest creature, the happiest apparition, it had been given him in all his years, to meet" (AMB.409).

James, in the novel, puts Strether in a fix between the two essentially different worlds of Woollett and Paris thereby filling his mind with agony and then flooding it with the light of perception. Initially, Strether learns of the positive values of Europe and of the evils of Woollett; later he learns of the evils of Europe. His first major step is his liberation from the narrow mindedness of New England represented by Mrs. Newsome. Strether's vision of Paris gives him a new vision of Woollett. He has always been aware of the greed and chicanery that were at the roots of the Newsome fortune. But, what he now sees is the denial of life and beauty that underlines the arid
consciences of Mrs. Newsome and her daughter Sarah. Their failure to see anything but vileness in Madame de Vionnet, or meritriciousness in the French capital, is also their failure to make anything out of the business of human existence but the few paltry rules of what they choose to call right and wrong. In his new vision Mrs. Newsome's high idealism takes on the colour of the cold inhumanity. Thus Strether's education through passion teaches him the fallibility of Woollett's "sacred rage" and more important, the beauty of another mode of living. But, his education becomes complete only when he sees the evil and ugliness of Europe, as surely as he had seen its good and beauty, and grasps their inseparable unity in the total drama of life. As a result of all his experiences, both good and bad, Strether finally acquires a greater humanity and hence refrains from passing any judgement upon Madame de Vionnet even after discovering her deception. He, in fact, continues to appreciate her as she really is and sympathizes with her forlornness. He also comes to the realization that he is no better than the Parisians and that they all share the common humanity with all its beauty and frailty.

Thus in this chapter we see how James tests his protagonists in the fire of passion and how they come out of it triumphantly with a new perception. Invariably all of them are tested in the sophisticated world of Europe and all of them encounter evil in the context of the most sublime and the most precious of all human emotions, namely love. Christopher Newman suffers
from thwarted love, Isabel from egotistic love, Milly from deceptive love and Strether from the adulterous love of Chad. But all of them, though disillusioned by their experience of love do rise from its shattering experience with an expansion of their consciousness which invariably makes them better and refined human beings.
NOTES


2 Lucian Goldmann "The Tragic Vision" 70.


6 Lucian Goldmann, "The Tragic Vision" 70.

7 Lucian Goldmann, "The Tragic Vision" 70.


11 Henry James, *The American* (London: Penguin Groups, 1995) 54. (All further references from the same novel will be listed parenthetically with the abbreviated form *AM.*)

12 Henry James, *The Portrait of a Lady* Vol.I (New York: Random House, 1951) 235. (All further references from the same novel will be listed parenthetically with the abbreviated form *PL.*)


14 Henry James, *The Wings of the Dove* ed. Donabld Crowley and Richard A. Hocks (University of Missouri: W.W. Norton and Company INC, 1970) 3. (All further references from the same novel will be listed parenthetically with the abbreviated form *WD.*)


17 Henry James, *The Ambassadors* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985) 153. (All further references to the same novel will be listed parenthetically with the abbreviated form *AMB.*)