CHAPTER - III

SUFFERING - THE PATH OF REALISATION
CHAPTER III

SUFFERING – THE PATH OF REALISATION

Human existence in this world is characterized by struggle and suffering. Though many live in this world only for a short span of time, suffering becomes inevitable to each individual. Malamud has analyzed the pathetic condition of human life in this mundane world in his novels. Suffering can be a blessing in disguise because it provides spiritual sustenance to human beings. No one would be willing to suffer but it is what many are destined to undergo in this world. Trying to escape from suffering would be a futile attempt and one should accept suffering in order to understand the meaning of life. Malamud considers man to be great not just because he has the fortitude to endure suffering but because he fights against all odds in spite of the hurdles he faces.

In the present society success is estimated by the amount of money and wealth a person has acquired. But in Malamud’s fictional world success and happiness lie not in the quantity of material wealth a person is able to amass in his lifetime but by the quantity of spiritual maturity he is able to gain in his life. Malamud’s concept of success also encompasses the ability a person has in maintaining healthy human relationships. Suffering and hardships a person undergoes will become meaningful only when he has a loving friend to share his burdens. Men in the post-war society expressed least regard for the moral values and tried to become rich by all means. Malamud insists that money is essential for our existence but virtue alone can make a person’s life worthwhile.
Man realises his true potentials only after undergoing great ordeals in his life. Everyone has the possibility of making mistakes. But it is in the hands of the individual to reform himself. Malamud believes that man has the potential to make his suffering meaningful. Malamud in his interview with William Kennedy in The National Observer has asserted man's capacity to change himself. He says: "A man is always changing and the changed part of him is all - important. I refer to the psyche, the spirit, the mind, and the emotions" (qtd.in Rajagopalachari 63).

Malamud has depicted the agony and anguish the characters face in the process of attaining self-realization. A person attains self-integration only when he accepts his past sufferings. By disowning their past, the characters fail to comprehend the world. Ego and pride inhibit the characters from seeing eye to eye with reality and also prevents them from identifying themselves with the society. Sidney Richman's statement: "To suffer out of love and principle is to see the ego die and the self dissolve in the terror of complete dispossession" (70), is relevant here.

Malamud's characters accept suffering and positively welcome the burdens that accompany those sufferings. Though people come from different traditions and face different destinies all are equally vulnerable to suffering and misfortune. Malamud in his fiction does not present suffering as a bane but as a privilege for it builds the personality of the individual. Suffering becomes the basis of self-awareness and leads the hero towards a new life.

Malamud's novels revolve around the theme of meaningful suffering. The term meaningful suffering can be related to the concept of moral development and self – realization that the characters attain through the suffering they have endured.
and through the struggles they have overcome. Suffering chastens one’s character for it develops endurance and paves the way to correct their mistakes. Suffering ennobles the sufferer to develop the capacity to suffer for others. By excluding suffering from life one cannot live a full life but by accepting and facing suffering one can enlarge and enrich it. Suffering disciplines the self and redeems it and thus leads to moral regeneration, which strengthens the spirit.

Life is a prism, which radiates various emotions at different phases of life and suffering is an inevitable part of life. Suffering is a boon in disguise for it nourishes the soul by providing spiritual strength and moral awakening. Through suffering a person disciplines his inner self. When a person accepts suffering for the well being of humanity he morally regenerates and this kind of suffering is called redemptive suffering.

Malamud’s characters do not rebel against the oppressive forces but they prefer to become victims; they submit themselves without complaining to their personal loss, pain and humiliation. The characters’ courage to accept their destiny without losing heart can be considered a privilege. Suffering is always considered to be the greatest misfortune but in Malamud’s fictional world, suffering is a blessing in disguise because it is the chief source of self-awareness and moral development. Through suffering Malamud’s characters overcome their ego, they understand their past mistakes and they learn to lead a better life.

Jewish - American writers have continued to emphasis the theme of suffering in their works. Malamud follows the ancient Jewish tradition, which believed that Jews were specially destined to suffer. F.W.Dupee states: “The Jew is humanity seen under the twin aspects of suffering and moral aspiration.
Therefore any man who suffers greatly and also longs to be better than he is can be called a Jew" (37). The Jewish literary sensibility has shown greater importance to the mental anguish and morality than to the pleasures of life. This is the main concern in the novels of Bernard Malamud. Suffering has the power to educate the individuals of the value of compassion. Unless a person undergoes suffering, he would not be able to attain moral maturity and without such spiritual growth he would not be able to understand the hardships faced by his fellow men. The characters in the novels have a conscience tortured by the past sins they had committed. They try to attain salvation through their penitent suffering and self-induced torture. Suffering paves the way for a better future and leads the characters towards a right path.

In his fiction Malamud has portrayed the problems of immigrant Jews who have settled in America. Though they slowly got assimilated into the main stream of American society, they carried along with them the pangs of their traumatic past. The Jews had lived under the most horrible and heart-breaking conditions during the Nazi regime. They experienced untold miseries. The Jews who were driven away from their homeland sought asylum in America. The Jews may be said to have experienced a second exodus in the nineteenth century. Those who came to America hoping for a better future experienced the travails of the economic depression of the 1930s. Malamud is conscious of the past sufferings of his fellow men. As a writer Malamud's sensitive mind has been deeply moved by the tragedy of the destruction of six million Jews in the Nazi regime. Malamud has used suffering which is the characteristic theme of Yiddish literature as his main concept of his novels. The Jewish folklore deals with the life of the poor people.
Irwing Howe in his *Introduction to Yiddish Literature* has propounded the main concept of Jewish literature. "The virtue of powerlessness, the power of helplessness, the company of the dispossessed, the sanctity of the insulted and the injured-these, finally, are the great themes of Yiddish literature" (289). By depicting the Jews as symbol of suffering, Malamud has heightened their suffering to a state of martyrdom. Though the Jews have faced disaster they have never lost hope in humanity. They have continuously struggled to maintain their dignity despite a lot of deprivations.

Suffering can be said to be the distinctive stamp of the Jews. Malamud has paid rich tribute to the sufferings faced by the Jews by portraying them as people of virtue. The Jews have struggled in order to attain justice and brotherhood. Their long years of suffering have enhanced their solidarity. In Malamud's novels the suffering experienced by the protagonists lead them to future happiness. Malamud is of the opinion that materialistic failure will lead to spiritual success. Robert Alter states: "Malamud sees, moreover, in the collective Jewish experience of the past a model not only of suffering and confinement but also of a very limited yet precious possibility of triumph in defeat, freedom in imprisonment" (35).

Though the suffering of the Jews to a very great extent has influenced Malamud, he has not restricted himself to a particular ethnic group but he has depicted his belief that men in general are also the victims of fate and bad luck. Malamud has universalized the concept of suffering.

Malamud's first novel *The Natural* deals with the difficulties a young baseball player encountered in the process of his self-realization. Most of Malamud's heroes are Jews. Roy Hobbs the protagonist of *The Natural* is a non-
Jew but he also experiences the pains and pangs of existence, which his Jewish-counterparts in the other novels encounter. Roy Hobbs was a country boy and Sam Simpson; an ex- baseball player discovered Roy’s talents in the game. Sam promised Roy that he would join him in a baseball team at Chicago. Roy travelled to Chicago along with Sam Simpson with the aim of becoming a great baseball player. Roy was just nineteen years old and he depended on Sam very much. Sam took care of Roy as his own son. During the journey, on a wayside contest, Roy defeated the greatest baseball player Whammer. Roy’s final ball accidentally hit Sam Simpson’s chest and in a few hours he died. Sam was not only a guide to Roy but he acted like a father. But Roy neither regretted for Sam’s demise nor did he recognize his part in Sam’s death. Roy’s lack of compassion and gratitude led to his failure. In the train Roy got acquainted with a beautiful woman Harriet Bird. She was disgusted with Roy because she felt that he had not yet comprehended the true meaning of life. She invited him to her house and shot him in the stomach. The wounded Roy had to give up the ambition of becoming a great player.

Fifteen years after this incident, Roy was able to join a baseball team, ‘The Knights’. The team manager Pop Fisher was a selfless man and his only aim was to make the team win the tournament. Bump Bailey was the leading player in their team. Bump failed to be a hero because he was haughty by nature and he never showed any liking for his team manager or for his teammates. Everyone disliked him since he was ever ambitious and proud. Bump accidentally dashed against a wall while he tried to catch a ball and was fatally wounded.

After Bump’s death Roy became the best hitter of their team. In spite of his age Roy was able to break all the records in baseball history. Roy’s ego began to
grow along with the enormous victory he was able to gain. Pop Fisher acted as a surrogate father to Roy. Roy was in love with a young temptress Memo Paris. Pop Fisher advised Roy to keep away from Memo because she would destroy his strength. Roy never followed Pop's advice. Roy's affair with Memo suggests that he had not learnt any lesson from his former experience with Harriet Bird.

Once Roy's teammate Red Blow advised Roy to carefully handle his earnings because everyone had a short life in baseball and he also asked to take care of his health. Roy thought that Red Blow was making fun of his advanced age and he answered: "To hell with my old age. I will be in this game a long time" (The Natural 64). The above remark is evident of Roy's egoistic pride.

Roy always tried to hide his past life from others. When the newspaper reporter Max Mercy asked Roy about his past life he rebuffed him by saying that his life was his private affair. He never liked to think about his past and to talk about his inner self was always "like plowing up a graveyard" (155). Roy never accepted his responsibility for his past and present failures and he refused to recognize the flaw in his nature. Roy considered his childhood days to be the happiest days of his life. He always had an urge to return to the former state of innocence by destroying his ambitions.

Sometimes he wished he had no ambitions—often wondered where they had come from in his life, because he remembered how satisfied he had been as a youngster, and that with little he had — a dog, a stick, an aloneness he loved (which did not bleed him like his later lone times), and he wished he could have lived longer in his boyhood. (117)
Roy Hobb’s skillful playing led ‘The Knights’ to a prominent position in the race for winning the pennant. Roy’s fans organized a function and celebrated Roy’s victory as “Roy Hobbs day” and they presented him a white Mercedes-Benz car. In return Roy wanted to thank Pop Fisher, his team mates and his fans but instead he ended up saying, “but I will do my best-the best I am able-to be the greatest there ever was in the game” (114). Roy’s ego inhibited and destroyed his natural feeling of gratitude.

Roy took Memo along with him for a drive in his car. They stopped near a pond and Memo confessed to him the failures of her past life. She said that her father abandoned her mother when she was very young. Her mother brought her up and at the age of nineteen she won a beauty contest and she went to Hollywood to become an actress. She failed in her effort and she ended up working at the nightclubs. After her mother’s death she came East and she faced many more difficulties until she met Bump Bailey.

She said to Roy that the happy days in her life were the days she had spent with Bump Bailey. She said, “After Bump I realized I could never be happy any more” (120). Roy was depressed by her affection for the dead Bump. Roy was not able to console neither her nor was he able to confess his sufferings and failures to her.

While returning from the woods Roy felt that he saw a boy walking along the road with his dog. Roy asked Memo to stop the car because he thought that the boy might cross the road. Memo did not listen to his request. Roy felt that the car hit the boy and he went back in search of the boy. Roy was unable to tell whether
the boy was his own imagination or someone alive. Likewise Roy was also careless at the crucial situations in his life.

After returning from the drive in the woods Roy was unable to concentrate in his game. Roy continuously performed badly and their team lost many matches in the season. Roy was able to play well only when he saw Iris Lemon standing among the audience to cheer him up. Later when he met her, she explained to him the importance and necessity of sacrifice in human life. She said that she stood up among the audience though she was embarrassed to do so because she believed that he would play well if he came to know the amount of trust people had in him. She further said: “I don’t think you can do anything for anyone without giving up something of your own” (155).

She explained to Roy that only few people have the potential to be heroes. She said that she hated to see a hero fail because it would be discouraging to his numerous followers. She explained to Roy the responsibility a hero has in the society. “Yes, it’s their function to be the best and the rest of us to understand what they represent and guide ourselves accordingly” (154). Only after listening to Iris’s analysis of the crucial role a hero plays in the society. Roy was able to realise his commitment to society.

Iris was a victim of rape and she became an unwed mother in her teenage. Amidst many difficulties and against the wish of her parents she brought up her child. Iris devoted herself and sacrificed her youth in order to bring up her daughter. In her letter to Roy she revealed her love for her daughter: “...loveliness and gaiety and all the tender feelings I had in my heart for her made up for a lot I had suffered” (210). Iris’s daughter married a worthy young man and at the age of
thirty-three Iris became a grandmother. After meeting Roy, Iris started to think about her personal life. She felt that he could resurrect her lost happiness. Iris’s life is an example of the ability each individual has in overcoming suffering and thereby achieving a purpose in life.

Iris taught Roy the important role of suffering in transforming one’s life. Through their conversation Malamud has clearly explained his principle of suffering. Iris taught Roy: “experience makes good people better” (158) and she further explained to Roy: “We have two lives Roy, the life we learn with and the life we live after that. Suffering is what brings us toward happiness” (158).

Roy in a disgusted manner said that he had faced lot of suffering. Iris insisted that suffering “teaches us to want the right things” (158) but he said that suffering had taught him only to avoid it. Roy’s refusal to learn from experience and to acknowledge the value of suffering shows his immaturity.

Roy under the insistence of Memo joined hands with the corrupters and decided to let down his team in the final match. In the course of the match Iris was hit by Roy’s misdirected ball. The wounded Iris’ request: “Win for us, you were meant to” (225) made Roy realise the need for winning the game for the sake of his numerous fans who trusted him. He came back reformed and decided to win the game but a young player defeated him.

Though Roy failed in his career, he had gained spiritual maturity. And he recognized the evil intentions of Memo Paris, Gus Sands and Judge Banner. The newspaper reporter, Max Mercy had exposed Roy’s corrupt deal and he had also revealed that a woman shot Roy when he was nineteen years old. Thus Roy’s attempt to hide his past became futile. Roy regretted his wrong decision because
he would be excluded from the game and the records he had created in the game would be destroyed. Women in the street commented: “he could a been a king” (237) and a newspaper boy asked Roy to say that he had not joined with the corrupters. Roy was unable to answer and he cried bitterly. In the end Roy’s ego dissolved and he understood the real cause for his suffering and he was prepared to suffer again: “I never did learn anything out of my past life” (236).

The novel *The Assistant* is about the Jewish grocer Morris Bober and the transformation and the progress of self-knowledge in his assistant Frank Alpine. In Morris’s moral vision, the value of suffering has prime importance. Frank a former anti-Semite, through his contact with Bober learned the importance of brotherhood. Morris Bober had escaped to America from the Russian army in order to save his life. He was unable to pursue his education. He married Ida and became a small grocery store owner. He had a daughter Helen and a son Epharim who died young. Morris faced a lot of difficulties during the Depression. Due to poverty he had to send his daughter to work. At the age of sixty, Morris was a poor man in the wealthy American nation. “He had hoped for much in America and got little. And because of him Helen and Ida had less” (*The Assistant* 27).

Frank Alpine was an Italian and he was brought up in an orphanage. His mother died a week after he was born and his father abandoned him at the age of five. He stayed in an orphanage for a few years. He was sent to live with a family at the age of eight. They treated him badly and he ran away from them. Frank told Morris the miserable conditions in which he existed afterwards. “He lived in gutter, cellars if he was lucky, slept in lots, ate what the dog’s wouldn’t, or
couldn't, and what he scrounged out of garbage cans. He wore what he found, slept where he flopped and guzzled anything” (91).

One day when he was lying inside a cellar, by some miracle he discovered that he had the potential to change his way of life. He thought that he could change his luck by becoming a criminal. He abandoned his wayward life and started to work. He saved some money and bought a gun and then he travelled in search of a new life. He met Ward Minogue and he persuaded Frank to join him in a hold-up against a Jew. Ward and Frank robbed Morris Bober's store. When Frank saw the poverty of the place, he realised that he had made the worst mistake. With that realisation he gave up his idea of becoming a criminal. The next day he came back to the store with a desire to expiate for the wrong he had done to the poor Jew.

Frank expressed his desire to work as an assistant to Morris Bober. Morris accepted Frank out of pity. While working in Morris's store Frank was surprised by the miserable existence of the Jews. Morris and his other Jewish friends Almarcus, the paper products salesman and Briet Brat who carried two cartons of bulbs over his shoulders for sale were struggling for their livelihood. When he witnessed their suffering he felt that the Jews “were born prisoners” (86).

Helen was a young woman of ambitions. She suffered because she was unable to compromise with her ideals. She lived with a hope that a better life would turn up. Helen did not accept the young Jewish men Louis Karp's and Nat Pearl's proposal for marriage because she felt: “We die so quickly, so helplessly. Life has to have some meaning” (43). She wanted to become a graduate and she hoped that one day or the other she would accomplish what she desired most. She lived in poverty but longed for things that were beyond her reach. To her,
education meant better possibilities of leading a sophisticated life. She was unable to take a correct decision in choosing her life partner.

During his early days in the store, Frank witnessed the plight of the Jews and he was surprised at the readiness with which they submitted themselves to their fate. He thought that the Jews lived only to suffer. He felt: “And the one that has got the biggest pain in the gut and can hold on to it the longest without running to the toilet is the best Jew” (88).

This was Frank’s idea before he understood the true meaning of Judaism. Morris Bober in due course became Frank’s teacher, guide and philosopher. Morris taught him that suffering is an inevitable part of human life and he also explained to Frank the true spirit of Judaism. Frank asked Morris what it meant to be a Jew. Morris said that a Jew should be ready to suffer for the Law which meant “to do what is right, to be honest, and to be good” (124). Through the conversation between the grocer and his assistant, Malamud has shown that irrespective of a particular ethnic group, every individual has to face suffering. Man can lead a happy life only when he accepts mutual responsibility and gets ready to wipe other’s tears.

“If you live, you suffer. Some people suffer more but not because they want. But I think if a Jew doesn’t suffer for the Law, he will suffer for nothing”.

“What do you suffer for, Morris?” Frank said.

“I suffer for you”, Morris said calmly.

“............... “What do you mean?”
"I mean you suffer for me."(125)

This dialogue indicates that the suffering of humanity can be mitigated only through universal brotherhood.

The protagonist of The Natural, Roy Hobbs was not aware of the flaw in his nature but Frank Alpine was aware of his own faults. Frank struggled to rectify the flaws in his character. Frank was unable to stop the habit of robbing and he occasionally flinched a few bucks in the store but he put the money back during hardtimes. After taking a few bucks without the knowledge of Morris, he suffered from remorse and self-hatred. He was troubled by his conscience and he felt as if he was carrying his friend's grave within himself. Frank thought that by confessing to Morris his part in the hold-up he could change his life completely. His guilty past always tortured him.

So the confession had to come first. It stuck like a bone through the neck. This thought had lived in him with claws; or like a thirst he could never spit out, a repulsive need to get out of his system all that had happened - for whatever had happened had happened wrong; to clean it out of his self and bring in a little peace, a little order; to change the beginning, beginning with the past that always stupendously stank up. Now-to change his life before the smell of it suffocated him. (89-90)

Though he tried to reveal his part in the hold-up, he was unable to gather the strength to own up the wrong he had done. He confessed to Morris his life and miserable conditions in which he existed but he did not say that he was the one who had conducted the hold-up.
Frank was overwhelmed with love for the grocer's daughter. He was afraid to express his love for her. He often spied her while she was in the bathroom. "He felt a throb of pain at her nakedness, an overwhelming desire to love her, at the same time awareness of loss, of never having had what he had wanted most and other such memories he didn't care to recall" (75).

He was aware that his action would cause him suffering and it aggravated his self-hatred. Frank carefully guarded the trust Helen had in him. Frank waited patiently with the hope that Helen would express her love for him without any inhibition. When Helen asked him to meet her in the park the next night Frank was overjoyed. He felt that she would give him the physical fulfillment she had formerly refused. Since he had no money with him to spend for her, he stole some money from the cash box. Morris caught him red handed and drove him out of the store. He waited for a long time in the park for Helen and he was also in a dilemma to explain the cause for Morris expelling him from the store. He became tired of waiting and went for a drink. When Helen came to the park she met Ward Minogue. Ward tried to rape her. Frank rescued her from Minogue and in spite of her refusal he tried to make love to her. Helen afterwards cried, "Dog – uncircumcised dog" (168)! Frank felt bad for having hurt Helen. As a consequence of his impatience, he lost Helen's love and trust.

Morris had gone to sleep without closing the gas radiator. He had inhaled a lot of gas and was admitted in the hospital. Frank saved Morris's life and he started working in the store to support Morris. He painted the shop in order to attract the public. Inspite of his efforts, there was no sign of improvement in the business. When Morris returned home from the hospital Frank confessed his part
in the hold-up. Frank said that he had suffered a lot and that at present he was a reformed person but Morris ordered him out of the store.

Ida had discovered that her daughter was in love with the grocery clerk. Ida had spent long hours helping her husband in the store inspite of her sick leg. She wanted Helen to marry a rich man. She did not want her daughter to face difficulties by marrying a poor man. Morris sent Frank from the store in order to satisfy Ida.

Morris considered himself as the victim of fate and circumstances. Morris felt that he was poor because, he was not lucky like his rich neighbours Karp and Pearl. He was sad because his rich friends had grandchildren, while his only daughter was approaching old maid-hood. Morris went to meet his former partner Charlie so that he might employ Morris in his store. Charlie became rich by cheating Morris. Morris endured suffering for his principle of honesty. Morris walked the whole way to New York City in search of a job and he returned dejected.

Morris's business was dull and he tried to sell the store but the attempt ended in vain. Karp proposed to buy their store. Morris and Ida believed that their suffering would come to an end. Karp's store was burnt in a fire accident and therefore he refused to buy their store. Thus Morris once again became a victim of ill luck. Morris tried to burn the store in order to claim insurance money. Morris ended up setting fire to his clothes and was rescued by Frank. Morris was affected by pneumonia and he died after being hospitalized for a few weeks. Before his death, Morris regretted that his life was a failure. He felt like apologizing to his wife for not providing her with a decent livelihood.
Frank took Morris' position in the store. He worked strenuously and gave the money to Ida. He tried to explain to Helen his true love for her but she vehemently avoided him. He once carved a wooden rose and gave it to her. It only reminded her of her former unhappiness. Frank decided to send her to college by working in a shop at night. He paid more money to Ida and Helen started attending college. When Helen saw the way he tortured himself for her sake, she felt that she owed her present happiness to him. She thanked Frank for his help and she said she was still using the book he had given her as a gift. After Passover, Frank became a Jew. The pain caused by circumcision inspired him because it externalized the idea that he would-be able to endure any amount of suffering for Helen's sake. H.E. Francis says:

Frank's conversion is important because he discovers not alone, but through another human being a law of conduct which might give meaning to the burden of suffering to life. As he accepts faith, he paradoxically eradicates barriers between theologies. (94)

Seymour Levin in A New Life travelled East seeking a spiritual rebirth. Levin went to Cascadia in order to accept his position of an English instructor at the Cascadia College. He came with a hope that it was a liberal arts college but it was a science and technology college. Levin was in search of a person on whom he can depend for guidance. In The Natural, Pop Fisher advised and guided Roy Hobbs. In The Assistant, Morris Bober was Frank's mentor. Likewise Levin was also in search of a surrogate father figure. When Levin met the department head Professor Fairchild, he came to know that they taught only grammar and
composition in that college. He was disgusted to know that humanity was not considered to be an important subject at Cascadia.

Gerald Gilley was Levin's colleague. He moved with Levin in a friendly manner. He introduced Levin to the department head and he also arranged for a separate room. Gilley helped Levin with a hope that Levin would vote in his favor in the election for department chairmanship. The other aspirant for the department chairmanship was C.D. Fabrikant. He was known to be a liberal scholar but he never mingled freely with his colleagues. He was a gentleman farmer. Levin found him to be more concerned with his farming than with the state of education at Cascadia. Other instructors were afraid to voice out their opinion because they feared that they might lose their job. Levin was unable to find a friend in Cascadia and he felt alienated. "He wanted friendship and got, friendliness; he wanted steak and they offered spam" (A New Life 125).

Levin was able to identify himself with Leo Duffy. Leo Duffy never makes his appearance in the novel and he had committed suicide few years before Levin came to Cascadia. Levin learnt that Duffy was discharged from duty on the charge that he was a radical. Levin discovered that Duffy had many liberal ideas, which the educators at Cascadia were not willing to accept. Levin felt that Duffy's ideals were identical with his own views. Levin accepted Leo Duffy as his spiritual father.

Levin felt miserably lonely at Cascadia. His student Nadalee compelled him to spend a weekend with her. He tried to avoid her with an aim of leading a principled life. He felt: "If I want sex I must be prepared to love, and love may
mean marriage. (I live by my nature, not Casanova's.) If I'm not prepared to marry her I'd better stay away" (139).

He failed to overcome his temptation. Afterwards he felt guilty for having made his student an object of sexual pleasure. He felt depressed because the change of place had not produced the change he had desired. He was not interested in teaching grammar and composition to his students and felt that his life as a teacher was a failure.

When Levin was in the state of unhappiness he met Pauline accidentally in the woods. They had an intimate relationship in the woods. Levin confessed the miseries of his past life to Pauline. He said that his father was a thief and went to prison often. After his father's death, his mother went mad and she committed suicide. His disappointment in love led to frustration and he tried to forget his miseries by becoming an alcoholic. Like all other Malamud heroes he too had a sudden awakening about the value of life. He said to Pauline: "I came to believe what I had often wanted to, that life is holy. I then became a man of principles" (201). He changed his way of life and completed his post graduation successfully.

Pauline identified herself with the suffering undergone by Levin. When Levin met Pauline earlier in the party at his colleague's house, she had shared with him her own difficulties. Her cause for discontent was that she was a barren woman. She cried because she had "married a man with no seeds at all" (193). She had two adopted children but she was still unhappy. She had an intuition that Levin was unhappy like her. Pauline regretted: "I too am conscious of the misuses of my life, how quickly it goes and how little I do. I want more from myself than I get, probably than I've got. Are we misfits, Mr.Levin?" (189)
Their adulterous relationship prolonged and ultimately they started loving each other. He was afraid that if their relationship was revealed, he would be disgraced publicly and he would be eventually expelled from his job. He felt guilty for having sexually enjoyed another man's wife. Levin came to know that Pauline and Duffy were lovers and he was sent out of college because Gilley revealed their affair. Levin awaited the same fate of Duffy.

Levin had sulfurous visions of himself as Arthur Dimmensdale Levin, locked in stocks on a platform in the town square, a red 'A' stapled on his chest, as President Labhart stood over him, preaching a hell-fire sermon denouncing communist adulterers, the climax of which was the public firing of Levin out of college. (244)

Pauline also felt guilty and avoided Levin for some time. He decided to sacrifice his love for Pauline's well being. After a few days, she came to meet Levin and said that she was pregnant. She said that she was willing to divorce her husband.

Gilley took custody of their adopted children and refused to give them to Pauline. Levin asked Gilley to give back the children to Pauline. Gilley asked to sacrifice his job as a price for the children. Gilley was surprised when Levin readily agreed to the condition. Gilley asked Levin: "An older woman than yourself and not dependable plus two adopted kids, no choice of yours, no job or promise of one, and other assorted headaches. Why take the load on yourself"(360)? Levin's simple answer: "because I can, you son of a bitch" (360), shows his determination to accept suffering and his willingness to shoulder responsibility. Levin's love for Pauline led him to this final moment of triumph. Though Levin has failed in his aim of becoming a college lecturer, he has
succeeded morally because he has decided to suffer for others. Levin who had suffered from loneliness and lack of love left Cascadia as a happy man with a loving wife and children.

In *The Fixer*, Yakov Bok is introduced as an embittered man who incessantly desires to change his luck by leaving the shtetl where he was born and brought up and to settle down in the city of Kiev. Like all other Malamud’s heroes Yakov is also an orphan who struggles for a living. Yakov’s mother died as soon as he was born, he claims: “I was practically born an orphan – my mother dead ten minutes later …” (6). When he was just one year old his father was killed in a pogrom. Misfortune followed Yakov from his childhood. The anti-Semites shot the first three Jews whom they saw; unfortunately Yakov’s father had been the second. Yakov had a miserable childhood; he was brought up in a stinking orphanage where he just managed to exist. Yakov summarises his suffering thus: “In my dreams I ate and I ate my dreams” (6). He was apprenticed in the trade of a fixer at the orphanage. From then onwards he struggled to make a living in the shtetl by fixing broken things. He tried his luck with the army. He was conscripted for the Russo Japanese war but since he suffered from asthma he was sent back after a few months.

Again he continued his job in the shtetl. He married Raisl, a poor peddler’s daughter. Discontentment was the only thing that lurked after seven years of married life because they were not blessed with a child. In her desperation to become a mother she ran to various doctors. Yakov’s indifference to her suffering hurt her and she deserted him after seven years of married life. Yakov’s father-in-law tried to dissuade him from leaving the shtetl. Yakov’s answer to his father-in-
law reveals his deep dissatisfaction with his life and his ardent yearning to start a
new life. Yakov said bitterly:

I've been cheated from the start ... What I've been through personally you
know already, not to mention living here all my life except for a few
months in the army. The shtetl is a prison, no change from the days of
Khmelnitsky. It moulders and the Jews moulder in it. Here we're all
prisoners, I don't have to tell you, so it's time to try elsewhere I've finally
decided. I want to make a living; I want to get acquainted with a bit of the
world (The Fixer 11).

Yakov was totally disillusioned by his failures and in a haste to change his
luck he planned to start a new life at Kiev. He wiped off his identity as a Jew by
shaving off his beard. He dressed like a Russian and set off on his journey in his
father-in-law's wagon. The wagon's wheel broke half way through the journey
and Yakov had to ride on the bony horse. At the end of the miserable journey
Yakov reached the River Dineper at night. Yakov sold the horse to the boatman to
ferry him across the river. Through his conversation with the boatman, Yakov
realised that anti-Semitic fanatics were very active at Kiev. Fearing his safety
Yakov dropped his bag containing his prayer book into the river.

By chance Yakov saved a rich anti-Semite who was drunk and half sunk in
the snow. As a sign of gratitude, the rich man posted Yakov as a supervisor in his
brick factory. Yakov hid his Jewish identity and gave a false name to his
employer. He lived in the premises of the brick factory. Jews were prohibited from
living in the area where the brick factory was situated.
Yakov was falsely accused of murdering an eleven years old boy for ritual purpose. Yakov was bewildered and he readily confessed that he was a Jew but otherwise he was innocent. Yakov's hands were manacled and were made to parade in the middle of the street between two columns of soldiers on horseback. Yakov was handed to the secret police and he was taken to an underground cell in the district court house. He was left alone in the cell till evening. In his desperation, he envisioned terrible things happening to him and he cried out: “My God, what have I done to myself? I'm in the hands of enemies” (72)! Yakov felt that he had suffered enough and more in his lifetime and was anxious about his future. Yakov blamed himself for his foolishness and made certain that he would be careful in future. “He had stupidly pretended to be somebody he wasn’t. Hoping it would create ‘opportunities’, had learned otherwise the wrong opportunities and was paying for leaving, if they let him go now he had suffered enough” (68).

In the evening the investigating Magistrate for cases of extraordinary importance, B.A Bibikov entered Yakov’s cell and he started his enquiry. During the enquiry Yakov realised that he had been arrested on the charges of murdering an eleven years old young boy. Yakov vehemently opposed the charge:

“Never! Never!” he cried hoarsely. Why would I kill an innocent child? How could I have done it? For years I wanted a child but my luck was bad and my wife couldn’t have one... And if that’s so how could I kill an innocent child? I couldn’t think of such a thing, I’d rather be dead. (74)

Yakov has been the victim of fate and bad luck. If his wife hadn’t deserted him, he would not have ventured into Kiev and into such problem. Yakov and
Bibikov discussed at large about the philosophy of Spinoza. Yakov claimed that though he was a Jew by birth, he was not a religious man, he claimed himself to be a free thinker who reflected on the lines of Spinoza. Yakov said to Bibikov that one can believe in any kind of God but He will not help people to overcome their sufferings or to fulfill their necessity. Yakov reflects his views on God, poverty and suffering as:

There’s also something called Necessity, which is always there though nobody wants it, that one has to push against. In the shtetl God goes running around with the Law in both hands, but this other God, though he fills up more space, has less to do altogether. Whoever you end up believing in, nothing has changed much in the world if you’re without work. So much for Necessity. (77)

Bibikov left a questionnaire to be filled by Yakov and asked him to hand it over to the guard. The next morning the guards humiliated Yakov by thoroughly searching him thrice since he awoke. They manacled him and escorted him to the investigating Magistrate's office. Yakov was investigated before the Magistrate. Bibikov produced Libedev, Yakov's employer's letter stating that he was ignorant of Yakov's Jewish origin and Zinaida Nikolaevna, Lebedev's daughter had sent a letter charging Yakov of sexual assault. These two letters were strong proofs against Yakov. By the end of the investigation the Magistrate accused Yakov of having murdered a young boy named Zhenia Golov for ritual purpose. Yakov was astonished and dumb struck. He was again locked in a cell along with thirty inmates. He tried to reason out the mistake he had committed. The more he tried to understand his fate, the more depressed he became. "His frustrated innocence
outraged him. He was unjustly accused, helpless, unable to offer proof or be believed" (104). The other prisoner joined together and hit Yakov savagely for they believed that he had killed a Christian child. Unable to bear their brutal attack, Yakov lost consciousness. Thinking that Yakov was dead, they stopped hurting him.

Nearly a month after his arrest, Yakov was taken to the cave where they had found the child's dead body. Colonel Bodyansky, Prosecuting Attorney, Grubeshov, Bibikov and Father Anastasy were present. The team first visited the brick factory. The foreman Proshko, gave his testimony against Yakov. Once Yakov had saved an old Jew who was badly wounded. He allowed the old man to stay in his room and the next day secretly he sent the old man away. The drivers Richter, Serdiuek and Proshko had seen an old Jew in Yakov's room. Before the Prosecuting Attorney they said that Yakov had killed the young boy and along with the old Jew he had used the boy's blood for some rituals. They had set fire to the stable and they were able to save only six horses out of ten. Their statement became strong evidence against Yakov. Marfa Golov, the murdered boy's mother cried out that the Jew had killed her son. The team next visited Marfa's house. Bibikov tried to bring out the truth by questioning Marfa who claimed that she was a widow of a pure character and she claimed that her son always complained about a Jew chasing on his way back from school. Bibikov enquired her if she was involved in receiving stolen goods from a gang of thieves and whether she had a lover who visited her. Bibikov said that he came to know that once Marfa beat her son severely that he lost consciousness. Marfa denied this information as rumour, Grubeshov interfered and stopped Bibikov's enquiry. The team next headed
towards the cave where they had found the dead body of the boy. Many Russians had gathered around the cave and the Priest, Father Anastasy started to sermon about how the Jews have tortured Christian children from time immemorial. Through his sermon he tried to instigate the Russians against Yakov. The priest said to the mob that Yakov was the murderer who had stabbed the child and drained his blood for ritual purpose. Yakov vehemently denied the accusation. Grubeshov intervened and instigated Yakov to confess that he had committed the crime.

Yakov said that he had not done the crime and thus cannot confess a crime that he had never committed. The disintegrated body of Zhenia was shown to Yakov and the mob outside. Father Anastasy concluded his speech by proving that Yakov had murdered Zhenia for ritual purpose. Yakov was again imprisoned. During the first days in the courthouse jail the accusation seemed almost irrelevant to him.

But after the visit to the cave he had stopped thinking of relevancy, truth or even proof. There was no “reason” there was only their plot against a Jew, any Jew; he was the accidental choice for the sacrifice. He would be tried because the accusation had been made, there didn’t have to be another reason. Being born a Jew meant being vulnerable to history, including its most errors. Accident and history had involved Yakov Bok as he had never dreamed he could be involved. The involvement was, in a way of speaking, impersonal, but the effect, his misery and suffering were not. The suffering was personal, painful and possibly endless. (155)
After a few days Yakov was taken to the Prosecuting Attorney Grubeshov’s office. Groubeshov promised to offer Yakov freedom if he confessed that the Jewish nation had compelled him to murder the boy. In spite of his frustrations and loneliness Yakov decided not to blame the innocent Jews. Grubeshov ordered Yakov to be sent to Kiev prison for preliminary confinement where he should await his trial. His uncertain future and shifting from the district courthouse to Kiev prison added misery to his bruised soul.

He feared the prison would go badly for him and it went badly at once. It’s my luck, he thought bitterly. What do they say? - “If I dealt in candles the sun wouldn’t set”. Instead, I’m Yakov, the fixer and it sets each hour on the stroke. I’m the kind of man who finds it perilous to be alive. One thing I must learn is to say less – much less or I’ll ruin myself. As it is I’m already ruined. (143)

At the Kiev prison Yakov was imprisoned along with twenty-five men. The cell was dark and it smelled of human sweat. The prisoners slept on a low wooden platform raised a few centimeters from the damp filthy floor. At supper the prisoners were offered soup and often they found dead mice and cockroaches in it. Those who tried to have an extra spoon of soup were beaten severely. The prisoners were suspicious of Yakov and they thought that he might be a spy sent by the police. When the prisoner approached, Yakov remembered how he had been beaten at the District Courthouse jail. As he had feared, a fellow prisoner named Fetyukov struck Yakov a hard blow on the head. Yakov fainted with blood trickling down his face. When Yakov regained his consciousness, the guard addressed him as “Jew bastard” (151)! Feltyukov felt sorry for having hurt Yakov.
he apologised and said that he had hit Yakov because he thought he might be a spy.

Fetyukov was in the prison for having murdered a stranger in a drunken mood. Fetyukov suffered from guilty conscience and he wished to be innocent like Yakov. Fetyukov gave an account of his shortcomings to Yakov.

It was a terrible thing I did. The man was a stranger to me.... I had had a drop, you understand and the next thing I knew I grabbed up knife and he was dead at my feet. God, who gives us life, let it hang by a thread. One blow and its torn away ... If I could say take your life again I would. I would say take your life and don't come near me again. I don't know why I did it but I don't want to be a murderer. (152)

Yakov had been imprisoned for three months. He desperately tried to put together the sequence of events that led him from the shtetl and landed him in Kiev prison. Russian officials had thought of a different plan to make Yakov confess the crime that he hadn't committed. They had sent a spy named Gronfien. Gronfein introduced himself as a Jew who has a lawyer working for him. Before being let out Gronfein, asked Yakov to write a letter about his plight so that he can gain the support of Jewish people and they might come to know about Yakov, who has become a martyr for their cause. Yakov wrote two letters one addressed to Shmuel, his father-in-law and another to his friend Aaron Latke, who had rented him a room at Kiev. Few minutes after Gronfein had left the cell, Yakov was astonished to see the letters that he had written in the warden's hand. Yakov was put in a small solitary cell for having broken the prison rules.

The isolated cells were rectangular cubicles, the outer wall had a single three barred window, half meter above Yakov's head. The door was made of solid
iron with a peephole at eye level. Once in a day the guard brought a bowl of watery, insect-ridden soup and slice of stale black bread. Yakov slept on the floor or paced back and forth the meager distance of the cells. "To be imprisoned alone was the greatest desperation the fixer had known. He hadn't the wit he told himself, to be this much alone" (178).

On the third day of his solitary confinement at midnight Yakov was taken to the warden's room. Yakov was surprised to see the investigating Magistrate, Bibikov waiting to meet him. Bibikov demanded a private enquiry with Yakov but the Deputy Warden hesitated to leave them alone. Bibikov rebuked him by saying that his function was investigating while the Deputy Warden's responsibility is custodial. Bibikov said that he had met the Minister of Justice, Count Odoevsky regarding Yakov's case. Bibikov felt bitter because he was pressurised from all quarters to file a false case of murder for ritual reasons on Yakov. Bibikov said that he had found out the truth behind the boy's murder. He suspected the boy's mother Marfa Golov to have a hand in the murder. He was waiting to authenticate the case with valid proofs. Until then he had planned to pretend as if co-operating with the other officials. Bibikov said that his purpose of meeting Yakov was to instil hope and confidence in him. Yakov while thanking Bibikov was unable to hide his bitterness. "In my cell I'm alone. In my thoughts I'm alone. I don't want to sound bitter to you because I'm thankful for your help" (175).

In the adjacent cell an anguished man was imprisoned. He started to tap the wall with his shoes. The man shouted to Yakov but the reverberations in the corridor muffled the words and changed them into noise. Yakov counted the beats he heard and translated them into the alphabets of the Russian language. But the
words he put together didn’t make any sense. Once a drunk guard forgot to lock Yakov’s cell. At first he suspected that the guards have purposely left without locking the door. They can shoot him and document his death as shot while trying to escape. Yakov gathered courage and sneak out to see the prisoner in the adjacent cell. Yakov was terrified to see Bibikov’s body hanging from the middle bar of the open window. After Bibikov’s demise Yakov lost hope and feared that the prison officials might kill him also. Until Bibikov was alive he hoped that his suffering would be brought to limelight and his innocence would be proclaimed through the newspaper. Yakov was deeply depressed by the state of affairs.

“Mama-papa”, he cried out, “save me! Shmuel, Raisl – anybody – save me!” “Somebody save me!” He walked in circles, forgetting he was walking, inventing fantastic plans to escape, each making his heartache because each was impossible. He walked all day and into the night, until his shoes fell apart and then walked in his bare feet on the lacerating floor.

He walked in almost liquid heat with nowhere to go but his circular entrapment, striking himself on his journey his chest, face, head, tearing his flesh, lamenting his life.(183)

Once Yakov’s foot was infected with sores and they were swollen. The guards mercilessly forced Yakov to crawl to the infirmary without any assistance. While climbing down the stairs Yakov’s knees started to bleed. When he paused for a while, the guard prodded him with the butt of his gun to move on. The infirmary was on the other side of the quadrangle from the prison cells. Halfway through the yard Yakov collapsed on the floor. The guards restrained other prisoners from helping Yakov. They tied some rags around Yakov’s hand and
knee and prodded Yakov with their foot to move on. Yakov somehow managed to crawl to the infirmary. The doctor operated on Yakov's infected sores without administering anesthetic.

Yakov was again condemned to an isolated cell. The worst treatment faced by Yakov was the frequent inspection of his body called "searches". The searches varied from three to six per day. The officials would lay Yakov naked and touch and test every part of his body. After these searches Yakov felt demeaned and very hurt. "His heart raced after these experiences, thickened in it and it took him a while to calm down" (204).

The officials provided him firewood to protect himself from the bitter cold because the guard said, "The higher-ups don't want you dying on them. You can't try a corpse in the court, as the saying goes" (195). Added to the torture, Yakov suffered from diarrhea and nausea due to secret poisoning of his food. Once Yakov realised that his food was poisoned, he fasted for five days. Yakov accused the warden of trying to kill just because they were unable to collect any true evidence against him. After Yakov had starved for five days, the Warden allowed him twice a day to go to the kitchen and draw his rations accompanied by a guard.

Yakov by now had been in the prison for nearly nine months. The Warden said that he had received a message that Yakov’s indictment was ready and that he would be taken to the court. Within an hour Yakov was in the street handcuffed accompanied by a guard. The dreary streets, leafless trees, blue sky whatever he saw brought tears to his eyes. He was taken to the Prosecuting Attorney's room. Grubeshov compelled Yakov to sign a confession stating that he had committed the murder unwillingly under the influence of his religion.
Yakov categorically refused to confess a crime that he had not committed but he said that he could confess only his miseries. Grubeshov tempted Yakov by saying that he would allow Yakov safe passage to America once he had signed the confession. Moreover Grubeshov said that the Tsar was aware of the ritual murder of Zhenia Golov and was convinced of Yakov's guilt and was willing to convict and punish him. Yakov was sure that he would be doomed for ever if he signed the confession and therefore he refused to do so. Yakov asked whether the Tsar would let a confessed criminal to escape from Russia. Since Yakov refused to sign the document stating his confession about the crime, he was again locked in the same cell. “His fate nauseated him. Escaping from the Pale he had at once been entrapped in prison” (227). Each day boredom and nervousness oppressed him and he feared that he might go insane.

Once the guard Zintyak, gave Yakov a copy of The New Testament. He read and memorized many passages from the Bible. Based on the report that Yakov was reciting passages from the Gospel, a Priest was sent to coax him into confession. The Priest failed in his efforts to convince Yakov. Once the Priest left the cell, the Deputy Warden searched the cell and confiscated the New Testament copy. The Warden cancelled Yakov’s permission to get his food from the kitchen. So Yakov’s daily excursion to the kitchen ended and he was locked permanently in the cell. The Deputy Warden threw a half torn Old Testament copy at Yakov. Yakov received a sixteen page long letter from Marfa Golov the murdered boy’s mother in which she had pleaded Yakov to confess. Yakov existed in a state of delirium, often he was unconscious, and mostly he lived in his memory and at
times came back to reality. "The fixer crouched in a dark place trying to hold his mind together with a piece of string" (250).

Yakov was unable to believe himself when his father-in-law Shmuel came to see him in the prison. He bribed the guard by paying him forty rubles of his hard earned money to meet Yakov. He insisted Yakov to have faith in God. Yakov bitterly replied that "I've asked for everything and got nothing" (257) from God. Yakov urged Shmuel to run to the rich Jews and journalists and somehow to save him before the Russian officials killed him.

The Warden found out that Yakov had a visitor that night. As a result Yakov was chained to the wall all day and at night he lay on the bed plank with his legs locked in the stock. Moreover searches of his body were conducted six times a day. Yakov was just able to move one-step forward or backward or sideways. The guards refused to remove the manacles even while he ate. Yakov used the spoon's handle to loosen the cement around one of the bolts. The guard bloodied Yakov's mouth with a blow and as a punishment; his stool was removed for a week. "In chains all that was left of freedom was life, just existence; but to exist without choice was the same as death" (267).

When Yakov had nearly completed two years of solitary confinement he received his indictment. He was astonished to note that there was no charge of ritual murder. The weakness of the indictment made Yakov doubt that they would never bring him to trial. They had kept him in solitary confinement for two years and tortured him just because they were unable to collect any evidence against him. The Prosecuting Attorney, Grubeshov permitted Yakov's wife, Raisl Bok to
meet her husband on condition that she would make him sign the confession so that he would be let free.

When the guard informed that his wife Raisl Bok had come to meet him, he was shaken and upset and refused to meet her. Later escorted by the guard Yakov limped to the prisoner’s pen in the visitor’s room. Raisl sat on a bench, separated from him by a heavy wire grating and a uniformed guard stood behind her. Malamud narrates Yakov’s embarrassment and emotional upheaval in the following passage: “My God, what have I forgotten? I’ve forgotten nothing. He experienced a depth of loss and shame, overwhelming — that the feeling of the past could still be alive after so long and terrible an imprisonment. The deepest wounds never die” (284). He felt like crying but he withheld his tears and yelled at her for having deserted him. When Raisl said she has given birth to an illegitimate child, Yakov thought there is no end to his miseries. Raisl tried to justify herself by giving an account of her shortcomings. She said, “I was barren, I ran in every direction. I flung myself against trees. I tore at my dry breasts and cursed my empty womb” (286). Yakov felt sorry for Raisl and readily agreed that he was also responsible for Raisl’s suffering. Yakov on seeing his wife poured out his hatred towards her but later he reconciled with her. He said: “I was out to stab myself, so I stabbed you, who else was so close to me? Still I’ve suffered in this prison and I’m not the same man I once was” (288).

Raisl then spoke to him about the letter sent by Grubeshov. Yakov vehemently answered that Grubeshov was trying to make him confess a lie that he had resisted for two years. He received the letter and instead of signing wrote that every word in the letter was a lie and on the cover he wrote a declaration
addressed to the Rabbi that he was the father of the son born to Raisl and that she was pregnant while she left him. Raisl slipped the cover into her pocket and gave the letter to the guard.

Yakov was again chained in his cell. It was two years since they had arrested him. A former Jurist met Yakov in his cell and announced that the Tsar had decided to pardon Yakov on the eve of the three hundredth anniversary of the rule of the house of Romanov and he would be permitted to return to his village. Yakov refused to be pardoned as a criminal. The Jurist of high repute was unable to understand, what difference it made whether he was pardoned as a criminal or as an innocent and tried to convince him. Yakov rebuffed the Jury by saying that what he wanted was a fair trial and not a pardon.

During his third summer in the prison Yakov received his indictment. The blood ritual theory was strongly renewed and expert's testimony was added to it. The fixer was worried about his fate. In a depressed state of mind and in anguish, he retrospected about his fate.

Now that he had this paper would they withdraw it and later issue another? Was this the newest torture? Would they hand him indictments, time after time, for the next twenty years? He would read them till he died of frustration or his dry brain exploded? Or would they, after this indictment, or the third, seventh or thirteenth at last bring him to trial? Could they make a story enough for circumstantial case against him? He hoped they could. Anyway, just barley. If not, would they keep him in chains forever? Or were they planning a worse fate? (297 – 298)
Grubeshov visited Yakov in the prison and compelled him to confess the crime. Later Grubeshov threatened Yakov that even if he faces the trial his suffering for the cause of his fellow men would come to nothing and he warns Yakov of the foreboding tragedy that would befall the Jewish community.

A trial will not save you or your fellow Jews. You would be better off confessing, and after a period of time when the public has settled down, we could announce your death in prison, or something of the sort, and spirit you out of Russia. If you insist on the trial then don’t be surprised if bearded heads roll in the streets. Feathers fly Cossack steel invades the tender flesh of young Jewesses. (300)

Yakov through the suffering he had undergone had developed the moral courage to remain unmoved by the insinuation of Mr. Grubeshov. Yakov rebuked Mr. Grubeshov in such a way that he felt irritated and left. Yakov’s will power is evident through the conversation he was with Mr. Grubeshov.

“Mr. Grubeshov, bring me to trial. I will wait for the trial, even to my death”.

“And death is what you will get. It’s on your head, Bok.”

“On yours,” said Yakov. “And for what you did to Bibikov.” (302)

When Yakov mentioned about Bibikov’s death Grubeshov felt that there was no use pretending to Yakov and left the cell. Few weeks after Mr. Grubeshov’s visit a lawyer named Julius Ostrovesky came to meet Yakov. Yakov was astonished to know that strangers, journalists and liberal representatives were aware of the public cause of Yakov’s sufferings. Two newspapers had published a probing article on Yakov’s case and had proved that Marfa Golov and her blind
lover did the murder. The government had fined the publisher and had shut down the press. The lawyer said that worst thing was Mr. Grubeshov himself was aware of Yakov's innocence but he had booked a false case on Yakov to favour the anti-Semitic Government. The lawyer instilled hope in Yakov's mind by saying that there are many people supporting Yakov. The lawyer said: "Where there's opposition to reaction there's also repression; but better repression than public sanction of injustice. So a chance you've got" (311).

The lawyer Ostrovesky informed that another lawyer Suslov Smirnov would represent Yakov in the court. Suslov Smirnov met Yakov and interviewed him and took notes and left. After two and a half years of rigorous imprisonment Yakov "was at the lowest ebb of his life" (317), the Warden announced that his trial was about to begin. Yakov thought about what Julius Ostrovesky spoke about the Russian state. Julius Ostrovesky had said that the Russian Government was ready to prosecute the minorities and supported the orthodox Russians in order to hide the breaches in the constitution. The anti-Semites rejoiced because they had the sanction of the government to murder the Jews. Yakov gradually understood that he was not suffering because of his own fate, shortcomings or circumstances but he was suffering for the cause of his community. He had become a victim by chance. If they had not arrested him, they would have found another Jew. Yakov realised: "no Jew was innocent in a corrupt state" (315).

The suffering endured by Yakov brought about a change in his attitude to life and this is the main theme of the novel. Through suffering Yakov realised that he was sharing the suffering and representing the Jewish community. Yakov was also aware of the change in him. The night before his trial he saw Bibikov in a
vision and said, “Something in myself has changed. I’m not the same man I was. I fear less and hate more” (319). Yakov understood that wherever a Jew goes he is always vulnerable and is victimised by the majority.

The next morning Yakov dressed and was ready to leave for the trial. Just before handing the prisoner to the Captain and his troop of soldiers who had come to escort Yakov to the trial, the Deputy Warden came with a telegram from Grubeshov instructing them to search Yakov’s body thoroughly again. Yakov was made to undress and was humiliated very badly. Yakov with bitterness said that if they searched him they could find only his miseries and nothing else.

Yakov was locked in a large coach and armed soldiers on horseback surrounded it. While travelling to the trial, Yakov had an imaginary conversation with the Tsar in his reverie. Tsar poses to be a neutral and a humane ruler and says that he had to suppress the Jews in order to maintain order. Yakov’s endurance changes into rage and he feels that the inhumane Tsar deservers to be shot in the gut. Yakov’s hatred towards the Tsar is due to the intense compassion he feels for the wronged Jewish community. The Tsar asks Yakov whether his suffering has taught him the meaning of mercy. Yakov refuses to learn any moral lesson from a hypocrite who pretends to be compassionate. Yakov curtly replies, “Excuse me, Yours Majesty, but what suffering has taught me is the uselessness of suffering…” (333). Though Yakov thinks that suffering is useless Edwin Eigner points out that “Suffering has taught him (Yakov) to fear less and to love Raisl whom he had hated and to hate the Tsar, whose loyal subject he had been” (105).

Yakov has not lost everything, for he had gained the support of the public on the way to the trial. Yakov saw people standing on either side of the road. The
reaction of the public was varied. Some shouted Yakov’s name to infuse confidence in him. Some were weeping and wringing their hands at him. A man threw a bomb at the carriage and it injured the leg of a policeman. Inspite of Yakov’s desire to be withdrawn from politics he has become a public figure. The novel abruptly ends with Yakov travelling to his trial and the novelist has not narrated the most awaited trail.

Malamud is more concerned with the moral maturity and the inner transformation the protagonist has undergone due to the suffering he had faced in life. Malamud has given more importance to the change in the protagonist’s attitude towards life and he has not given importance to the historical facts. Tony Tanner remarks:

The trial is not a matter of sentence or acquittal but the imprisoned years, which preceded it, during which a man has the chance to derive some meaning from what he is caught up in. It is in the prison not in the courtroom, that a man must win his freedom and earn a new life. And what the judge will finally say is less important than man’s developing attitude as he moves towards his last reckoning. (338)

The Tenants is about the agony experienced by two novelists, who are the protagonists of the novel. Harry Lesser, the Jewish novelist struggles hard to finish his third novel, which he expects to be his masterpiece. Lesser is a victim who suffers for the sake of art and scarifies his happiness, love life and friendship and lives alone in a lonely apartment in order to complete his dream project. Willie Spearmint is a Black writer. By contrast he is a rebel and expresses hatred and violence in his writings. He tries to record his experience in his novel and he is
impulsive and passionate by nature. *The Tenants* also analyses the estranged relationship between the two ethnic races – the Jews and the Blacks. Malamud explains the factor that caused the novel: “Jews and blacks, the period of the troubles in New York City, the teachers strike, the rise of black activism, the mix up of cause and effect. I thought I’d say a word” (Stern 61).

Harry Lesser was always obsessed with the thought of completing his novel and avoided entertaining other kinds of emotions. He remained alone and dedicated his life for creating an exquisite work of art. He had published two novels, the first novel was well received and it was a success. Though his second novel was a flop, a moviemaker bought the script. It was nearly nine years since he completed his second novel. All these years he lived upon the money he received through selling his second novel. He had been working exhaustively and completely on his “long suffering manuscript” (*The Tenants* 1) for nine years and was nearing completion. Malamud has brought out the creative travails undergone by Harry Lesser in the process of completing his novel. His desire was to make his third novel his masterpiece. “My deepest desire is to make my third my best. I want to be thought of as a growing concern, not as a freak who had published a good first novel and shot his wad” (8). Inspite of revising and rewriting for nearly ten years the prospect of completing the novel remains vague from the beginning. Lesser's suffering and restlessness is suggested in the first few lines of the novel.” I’ve got to get up to write, otherwise there’s no peace in me” (3).

Malamud compares the creative process of Lesser with the desolate and crumbling tenement in which he is staying. The owner of the building, Levenspiel wanted to demolish it and was often pleading Lesser to vacate the apartment.
Thirty-five families living in the premises had accepted the landlord's pay off and had vacated. Lesser was the only tenant staying in the six storied building. Lesser stubbornly stayed in his apartment because he wanted to finish his book in the same place where he had started to write. The creative process of writing a book instead of making Lesser involved in life kept him away from the worldly affairs. Lesser felt that writing a book was not a pleasant experience but it took him towards death and desolation. Lesser was unable to complete the novel; however hard he tried he found it difficult to come to a conclusion.

Lesser makes things hard for himself for certain reasons. That's a long tale but right now it means he doesn't know how to end his book. Nor why the ending, this time, is so hard to come by if you've invented every step that leads to it, though some crumble when you look hard at them. Still, it's bound to come, it always has. May be its some kind of eschatological dodge? Like an end which is more than I can stand? Each book I write nudges me that much close to death? (4)

When Lesser sat down to write he felt depressed and dejected for having sacrificed all the pleasure of life for the sake of writing the novel. The trauma of the creative process lurked in his subconscious mind. He always feared how the public would receive the novel; if the novel became a flop, his ten years of labour would become a waste. When he completed his second novel he was twenty-seven years old, now he was thirty-six. The thought that a decade of hard labour might go in vain weighed down heavy on his head. "Time past is time earned unless the book was badly conceived, constructed, an unknown lemon; then it's dead time. 
Perish the thought” (14). Lesser wrote in the morning hours and in the afternoon he typed whatever he had written in the morning.

Levenspiel, the house owner met Lesser and pleaded with him to vacate his apartment and gave an account of his suffering. Levenspiel requested Lesser to have more mercy and he spoke about his sick wife, his teenage daughter and insane mother. He also spoke to Lesser about his financial problems and offered thousand dollars to Lesser to vacate the apartment. Lesser who is very egoistic by nature failed to understand the woes of Levenspiel. Lesser said that he would lose his concentration if he changed the place. He was worried that Levenspiel was wasting his writing time but never tried to realise the house owner’s miseries. Lesser’s selfishness is explicitly brought out in the following passage by Malamud:

My last book, for reasons I won’t go into, was a bomb. I have to redeem myself in my own eyes with nothing less than a first-rate piece of work. I’ve practically got it done, but the last section, I confess is resisting a little. In fact it’s beginning to crock me out of my skull. Once I hit it right — it’s a matter of stating the truth in unimpeachable form, the book will be off my chest and your back. I’ll breathe easy and move out overnight. You have my word on that, now go away, for Jesus’ sake, you’re eating up writing time. (17-18)

The desolate atmosphere of the decaying apartment created an image of death which can be synchronized with Lesser’s mind set. Lesser’s flat was on the sixth floor. Except Lesser’s, the other apartments were vacant. The elevator was not operating and he had to climb the stairs. He had skipped supper for months and
was living on apples and milk. The thermostat was not working and Lesser had a heater to keep him warm. The roof garden was no more existing and the walls of building were defaced. At night many ruffians came into the building and stole whatever they found in the empty apartments. Lesser often wondered whether there was “a funeral parlor on the premises” (24). The uninhabited decaying building was dirty and stinking, yet Lesser preferred to stay. There was complete silence except the sound of the wind. Sometimes Lesser felt: “Silence flowered into primal noise, utter deep silence: graveyard music” (25).

Once Lesser had heard a curious noise and was astonished to find a Black man typing in an adjacent apartment. Lesser felt embarrassed to intrude while the Black man was busy typing and waited at the doorway. Lesser tried to be friendly with him but the Black man spoke very bluntly and rebuked Lesser for interrupting while he was writing. Lesser introduced himself as a writer. The Black man introduced himself as Willie Spearmint and said that he had selected this secluded place because he wanted a private place to write peacefully. Lesser felt consoled to find a fellow writer in the same premises. After a few hours Willie came to Lesser’s apartment and requested him to keep his typewriter safe in his house and the safety of the manuscript was a constant worry for these writers. Willie took his manuscript along with him in a briefcase. Lesser kept a copy of his manuscript in a nearby bank.

Willie said that he wrote on all days except Sundays because he spent Sundays with his beloved, Irene Bell. Lesser envied the love life Willie was enjoying. Even though Lesser yearned for love and companionship still he kept himself aloof from actively experiencing life for he felt that he should totally
dedicate himself to the process of creating a masterpiece and he felt that his concentration would get deviated if he took a break from his monotonous writing schedule by relaxing his mind and body.

Lesser saw Levenspiel parking his car through the window and ran to Willie and warned him to hide somewhere and he carried the typewriter to his room. Before Levenspiel could climb the stairs, Lesser locked his door and sat with the newspaper. When Levenspiel knocked at the door Lesser didn't have the courtesy to open the door; Levenspiel listed out his misfortunes and pleaded with Lesser to vacate the house and left. Willie appreciated the interest Lesser had shown in him and they planned to have a party at Lesser's place in near future.

On a Friday night Willie came to Lesser's flat with his beloved Irene Bell and a Black couple Mary and Sam accompanied them. Irene was a lonely sad girl; even her smile seemed to reflect her sadness. Lesser envied the way in which Willie was able to shed his writing and was enjoying himself whereas Lesser was unable to shed his writing self for whatever work he did, his mind was always preoccupied with his writing. Lesser's aim was to create art; his book was about a writer who tried to express truth and love in vain. In fact Lesser should have found out the true meaning of life before writing the fiction.

Willie wrote to gain money, fame and especially powers to bring down the oppressive forces, acting against the Black community. Lesser was quite surprised when Willie gave his manuscript and pleaded with him to go through the manuscript and to give his suggestions. First part of Willie's novel was autobiographical and it was titled "Life and work". The second part of the manuscript consisted of fifty short stories. After reading the manuscript Lesser felt
that Willie's writing lacked a sense of form or structure. Willie in a sprawling manner had angrily narrated his tortured past. Willie had used his writings as a means to express his hatred over the oppressive forces in the society, especially his hatred for the Whites. While Willie was in the prison he decided to become a writer. Willie felt free and happy while writing and was able to forget his miseries but his writing had an over dose of hatred and violence. Willie felt: "...I am not afraid of the fucking prison because I am out of it as much as I am in. I am in my imagination... The more I write on the terrible and violent things of my life, the more I feel easier on myself" (63).

Lesser was moved by Willie's writing, for the subject was very emotional in nature. After understanding the suffering and injustice that Willie had undergone, Lesser was very much affected by his writings. Willie tried to define himself through his writing and he tried to find a salvation for his shortcomings through writing. Though Willie's writing was powerful, it completely lacked in form and thus marred the narrative. Willie's writing finally deteriorated into revenge fantasies because he used his writing as a means to express his inept rage against the White oppressors. Willie had variously named his manuscript as "Missing Life", "Black Writer?" and "Book of a Black".

Willie believed that by recording his personal experience he could universalise the experience of the Black people. Lesser advised Willie: "To make black more than colour or culture, and outrage larger than protest or ideology" (67), there by to develop a unique quality and thus convert personal experience into art. The first signs of antagonism and disharmony arose between the two writers when Lesser attempted to generally criticised Willie's manuscript. Lesser
pointed out that Willie should give more emphasis to form and technique. Lesser commented: “There’s a flawed quality, what you call blurred, that gives the shifting effect...” (72). Lesser asserted that there is no doubt that Willie is an excellent writer and that his autobiography is an emotionally intense piece of prose. Lesser was shocked when Willie said that his manuscript was purely fictional and has no trace of autobiography. Willie was irritated by Lesser’s comments and said that he had already revised his manuscript four times and had no more patience to revise it again. Lesser tried to make Willie understand: “You can’t turn black experience into literature just by writing it down” (74). Willie considered Lesser unfit to judge his writing because the prejudiced Willie thought that a White man can never understand Black experience. Willie failed to realise his mistake, he said to Lesser “What I feel you feel different, You can’t write about black because you don’t have the least idea what we are or how we feel. Our feeling chemistry is different than yours” (74).

Willie was a revolutionary in spirit. He used his writing as a means to express his hatred against the White community. Willie’s egoism prevented him from understanding Lesser’s criticism in the right spirit. Willie believed that by recording his own experience he could universalise Black experience. His work is very egoistic and thus he failed to create a unique effect in his writing. Willie’s egoism is evident in his answer to Lesser that his art contained both form as well as content. “Art can kiss my juicy ass. You want to know what’s really art? I am art. Willie Spearmint, black man. My form is myself” (75).

After a few days Willie and Lesser patched up the difference of opinion between them. Willie agreed to learn grammar from Lesser and was willing to
improve his writing with respect to its form. Willie was impressed by the
dedication and sincerity with which Lesser worked on his novel continuously.
Willie also started to work long hours and started to stay in the apartment over
night and left in the weekends to stay with Irene. Once Levenspiel came to inspect
the building and found Willie there. As usual he begged Lesser to vacate the
building and left saying that he would come back with a cop to vacate the
trespassing black writer.

Lesser was worried about Willie’s safety. Once Levenspiel had left the
building, Lesser invited Willie to his apartment and made him stay there. They hid
his typewriter. After half an hour Levenspiel came with a cop. The Policeman
wanted to search Lesser’s apartment. Lesser said that he would allow the cop
inside only if he had the warrant. The cop waited for Willie for sometime and left
the building. Willie was disturbed to see his table and chair smashed to piece and
was worried about finding another place for writing. Lesser bought second hand
furniture and placed them in the flat opposite Lesser’s. Willie showed Lesser the
first few chapters of his newly started novel. He was happy that Lesser appreciated
his work as a well formed piece of writing.

Once Lesser felt depressed and was walking through the streets and he
accidentally met Irene. Irene confessed her past sufferings to Lesser. She said that
in her desire to become an actress she had discontinued her college studies and
tried for a chance in films. She was obsessed with the idea of becoming an actress.
When her attempts to become an actress failed she was unable to overcome her
depression. She started to lead an immoral life. Irene confided to Lesser that “I
was a fucked – up kid, I drew men like flies and slept around till I began to wake
up frightened" (118). Suddenly she realised her mistakes and determined to lead a disciplined life by staying true to one man. She had met Willie three years back and had stayed faithful to him all these days. Irene was impatient to lead a family life and felt hurt because Willie was slack in committing himself to a married life. Irene complained to Lesser that Willie gave more importance to his book than to her. When Irene enquired about Lesser's past life, he was not ready to confess his sufferings. Instead of sharing his suffering with Irene, he ran to continue his writing. He was satisfied with winning the friendship of Irene. He preferred to complete his work than to spend time with Irene.

Lesser once spotted Irene and Willie walking in the street along with a group of Black people. Willie waved to Lesser and he joined the group to overcome his loneliness. There were twenty members in the party, Irene and Lesser were the only Whites in the group. Lesser was jealous to see Irene and Willie dancing together. He felt that "They looked like married folk" (125).

Just to overcome his momentary sense of loss and sorrow, Lesser accepted Mary's invitation and enjoyed sex with her. Though Mary was willing she was very rigid. She said that she has to prepare her mind for sex because she was a victim of rape when she was very young. Mary felt very intimate with Lesser and she confessed her past suffering to him. She said that an embittered boy living in the neighbourhood had raped her. His White father often ill-treated his Black mother and the boy was filled with hatred and unfortunately Mary became the victim of his hatred. Lesser had no compassion or solace to offer her.

Willie's friends and especially Sam wanted to hurt Lesser for his behaviour. Willie changed the physical attack into an attack with words. They
humiliated Lesser with abusive words and he left the place hurriedly fearing a brutal attack from the Blacks. Lesser realised that he was in love with Irene and he felt that he need not feel indebted to Willie for having saved him from his angry friends. Lesser professed love to Irene and she was frightened to get involved with another writer. She was frustrated by expecting that Willie would marry her but had lost hope. When Lesser promised to marry her after completing his book, she believed that he would be true to his words and accepted him and decided to break the bond between her and Willie. Lesser compelled Irene to inform Willie of their relationship. Lesser felt that Irene was his possession and the thought that Willie might still come to meet Irene bothered him. He admonished Irene that “Wouldn’t it bother you if he expected to get into bed with you? You’re not his bitch any more” (146).

Irene was not sure whether Willie had stopped loving her and she also felt guilty for cheating him. Irene had started living with Willie with the hope that they would get married shortly. She had agreed to support Willie till he received some advance cash on his book but Irene had been supporting him completely from the day they started to live together. Irene realised that Willie cannot provide her a promising future and moreover he was concerned with becoming a good writer and blighted Irene’s happiness. Irene was impatient to lead a family life and so she decided to desert Willie. She insisted Lesser not to reveal their relationship to Willie and that she would tell him at the appropriate time because of his unpredictable character.

By gaining Irene’s love, Lesser was able to overcome the loneliness that was oppressing him. He was happy that his writing progressed well. He became
more optimistic as his book was nearing completion. Irene was often meeting Lesser and they talked about their life from childhood. Since Willie had not visited her for months together, Irene was sure that the affair between her and Willie would naturally wane off. She admonished Lesser not to reveal their love affair to Willie. Irene felt that only when Willie came to know that she had deserted him, he would realise his mistakes. Irene was bored with the monotony of her life. She had decided to quit her job of an actress since she felt that acting did not come to her naturally. She desired to find an interesting job and settle down in San Francisco and to quit New York after her marriage with Lesser. Irene expressed herself thus: "I want to really change my life. I've had enough of certain kinds of experience" (154).

Willie after a long absence came to Lesser and thrust into his hands a sheaf of papers and requested Lesser to read and give his comments about the second part of his manuscript. From Willie's fatigued appearance it was evident to Lesser that Willie had suffered and had strained himself to include the form and technique that was taught by Lesser into his book. Willie had lost weight and looked haggard. Lesser read Willie's manuscript patiently and gave an unbiased criticism of his work. Willie was enraged and was unable to accept the mistakes pointed out by Lesser. Willie felt dejected and decided to quit writing. Lesser felt guilty for having cheated Willie who had totally trusted him. Lesser informed Willie that he and Irene were in love and that they were contemplating marriage. Lesser had taken it for granted that Willie had already broken off with Irene and this revelation would not affect him. On the contrary Willie was deeply hurt by the fact that Lesser whom he trusted most has stolen away his girl. "A sad and
terrifying groan, a sustained tormented lament as though erupting from a crack in the earth, rose from his bowels” (167).

Lesser’s confession of his love affair with Irene precipitated the hatred that had developed between the two writers. Willie acted violently and fought savagely with Lesser. Willie banged Lesser’s head against a wall and then tried to throw Lesser out of the window. Levenspiel broke them apart and saved Lesser. Willie with rage went straight to Irene’s house and bet her severely for having cheated him. Willie burnt Lesser’s manuscript as he thought it was the only means of taking revenge on Lesser. Willie wrote a charcoal message on the wall: “Revolution is the real art. None of that form shit. I am the right form. He signs it Never your friend. And pukes in the smoking ashes” (178).

Lesser was worried about Irene’s safety and set out to visit her. As expected Irene was crying and her eyes were blackened and lips were swollen from Willie’s harsh treatment. Lesser consoled her that they can get married as soon as his book was over. When Lesser came back he was astonished to see the door being open.

With a groan of lamentation he ran from room to room, searched his study closet blindly, stumbled into the living room and frantically hunted through masses of old manuscript pages, poured over piles of torn books and broken records. In the bathroom, after looking into the tub and letting out a prolonged tormented sad cry, the writer, on the edge of insane, fainted (175).

By burning Lesser’s manuscript Willie had taken his revenge on Lesser for degrading and betraying him. Lesser had kept the copy of that week’s work in a
safety deposit box in a bank on second avenue. Lesser brought home the box that contained the first draft of the novel from the bank a few days before to make the final corrections. He cursed himself for bringing the copy from the bank and thus he lost all the copies of the manuscript, which was the fruit of ten years of systematic hard labour. Lesser decided to rewrite the novel. He felt: “The book is not the writer, the writer writes the book” (180).

Lesser started to work extra ten hours a day. Through systematic hard work and sheer inspiration he started to rewrite the novel. In the process of rewriting the novel he encountered all problems peculiar to a writer. However hard he squeezed his brain the best passages he had written in the destroyed first draft were impossible to recall. Though Lesser felt confident that he can write better in his second attempt, he had his own doubts about succeeding in his endeavor. He was impatient to complete his book and to marry Irene but as days passed on the completion of the book became a nightmare.

Sometimes the writing goes really badly. It is painful when images meant to marry repel each other when reflections, ideas, won’t coalesce. When he forgets what he meant to write and hasn’t written. When he forgets words or words forget him. He types wither for either all the time, Lesser sometimes feels despair’s shovel digging. He writes against cliffs of resistance. Fear, they say, of completing the book? Once it’s done what’s there to finish? Fear of the ultimate confession? Why? If I can start another book after this. Confess once more. What’s the distant dark mountain in my mind when I write? It won’t fade from inscape, sink, evanesce; or volatilize into light. The writer wants his pen to turn stone into sunlight, language
into fire. It's an extraordinary thing to want by a man his size and shape, given all he hasn't got. Lesser lives on his nerve. (184)

Lesser quickly overcame his mourning over the destroyed manuscript. He built up his confidence and will power to rewrite his lost manuscript but he doubted his own credentials and at times felt all his labour would become waste. Lesser had treated Willie as a friend and had no intention of hurting him. Lesser reminisces about his past life and reflects about the futility of human life. When Lesser was a small child his mother had died of an accident. His brother was in the army and was reported to be missing in action. He had not visited his aging father for years. He felt: “Life is so fragile, fleeting. One thing about writing a book you keep death in place; idea is to keep on writing” (198).

Lesser’s mind was eternally occupied with thoughts of completing the book. Even though he longed for and desired to be near Irene, he met her less frequently. As Lesser’s completion of the book prolonged for months together, Irene became impatient and doubted whether he would marry her at all. Irene felt guilty for she was the ultimate reason for Lesser loosing his manuscript. So she tried to wait patiently for him to complete his work. She expressed herself thus: “... I’m not career - oriented; I’d rather be married and have a family. Does that disappoint you in me, considering how many women are going the opposite way nowadays?” (188)

Lesser promised to marry her after completing his book. Levenspiel offered a bribe of ten thousand dollars to quit the tenement. Irene advised Lesser to get the amount so that they can get married and he could write in a sophisticated house of their own. Lesser was adamant to stay in the decaying building because the
shifting to a new place would interrupt his writing. Irene felt disappointed and rebuked him thus. "Now and forever, till death do you part? And if not this book, then the next" (191). She felt that he would neither finish his book nor give up writing for her sake. Irene wrote a note that she was leaving for San Francisco. Lesser lost Irene's love and tried to create the love in words but in vain.

Willie came back to the same tenement and continued writing. Lesser and Willie met felt "mutually repelled" (223) against each other. However hard they tried to forgive each other they still felt prejudiced. Lesser felt frustrated that his work was not proceeding well. Lesser found it difficult to keep on writing the same thing twice and he felt miserable to imagine a future without Irene. The feeling of revenge and hatred dominated Lesser and he felt that he would feel better if Willie left the building. Lesser remembered everything he had written in the first draft but he was unable to rewrite it again. "How can one write the same thing twice? It's like trying to force your way back into yesterday" (226). Lesser brought an axe and hacked up Willie's typewriter until it was mangled to pieces. Still he kept mourning over the loss of his manuscript.

On one moonless night Willy and Lesser met each other near a bush and engaged in a savage fight. "They aimed at each other accurate blow. Lesser felt his jagged axe sink through bone and brain as the groaning blacks razor – sharp saber, in a single boiling stabbing slash, cut the white’s balls from the rest of him" (229 – 230). The novel ends with the mutual murder of Lesser and Willie. The deadly hatred the writers felt against each other killed whatever chance they had of completing their work to a successful conclusion. Through this novel Malamud
has given a warning to posterity about the dire consequence one would reap if they acted without compassion.

The conflict in the novel Dubin's Lives deals with the struggle between two fierce powers, the exploding sexual impulse and the self-discipline necessary for maintaining communal rules and institutions. The novel’s battleground is the ongoing struggle between instinct and intellect, which shapes the fate of the characters. William Dubin the biographer who is approaching sixty, fears old age and death. Kitty Dubin in her early fifties always mourned her losses. The young Fanny Bick had many ideas but was afraid to take a concrete decision regarding her future. Dubin worked hard and tried to define himself through the books he has written. He tried to ward off the signs of old age by strict diet and regular exercise. Circumstances juxtapose Dubin in a dilemma where he is compelled to make a moral choice; the novel clearly presents the psychological tension caused by the problems of sex, love and infidelity. Robert Rubenstein remarks: "Dubin’s Lives opens out to address the limits of love, and marriage, of familiarity, of self fulfillment and fiction themselves by articula the inconsistencies and emotional contradictions of real people" (Rubenstein 58).

Dubin and Kitty lived in Center Campobello a small town in New York. He was a biographer and he had received a medal from President Johnson for his biography on Thoraeu. Kitty suffered from insomnia. She was never content in her life, she always mourned over her losses. Kitty lived in the memory of her first husband Nathaniel and at times Dubin felt that he was her "step husband" (Dubin’s Lives 254) and not her second husband. Kitty constantly worried about her children; Gerald and Maud. The children had grown up and left the house.
The absence of the children, a constant remembrance? One day their childhood, and your enjoyment of it, was over. They take off as strangers not confessing who they presently are. You tried to stay close, in touch, but they were other selves in other places. You could never recover the clear sight of yourself in their eyes. They had become, as though by need, or their own definition, distant relatives. (40)

Without the children around Kitty kept complaining that the house was empty. Dubin patiently bore the burden of an insomniac wife. He sympathetically listened to her complaints and advised her to find a job. Kitty started to work as a volunteer in the town clerk's office. When Kitty started to work she felt better because she confessed that she stopped thinking.

Fanny Bick, a young girl in her early twenties came to work as a cleaning person in Dubin's house. Fanny had discontinued her college studies since her father had refused to support her. She stayed in a Buddhist commune for sometime. She stopped in the small town to earn money before she could decide upon her uncertain future. The presence of a vital young woman in the house created disjunction in Dubin's ordered life. He often left his study to advise Fanny. He termed these moments as a source of innocent pleasure.

Dubin wondered how at his age a young woman's presence in the house had moved him to the deepest feeling of pleasure. In despair he exclaimed, "My God, how long does this romantic hunger - residue of old forms, habits, day dreams - haunt the blood?" (27) Dubin was discussing Lawrence with Fanny; she said that she preferred to enjoy her life as she pleased and that her life was not governed by any moral values. Dubin was intensely aware of her beauty. In an
unexpected moment Fanny offered herself to Dubin. Though Dubin desired her most, he refused her kind offer, for his morality inhibited him from having sex with a girl of his daughter's age.

Dubin thought; yet even in the best of circumstances he doubted he would have tried to entice her into bed. She was only a couple of years older than Maud and he sensed in himself something resembling incest taboo once removed - you don’t bed down a girl your daughter’s age let alone other inhibitions. (32)

Kitty's father committed suicide when she was four years old. Kitty's mother abandoned her and went with a lover when she was nine years old. Her loving grandmother brought her up. Her husband died of leukemia at the age of forty. At the age of twenty-six she was a widow with a three year old boy to look after; she wrote a matrimonial advertisement to a newspaper. Before the advertisement could be printed she sent a letter canceling the advertisement. Since Dubin was working as an editor in the Newspaper he happened to see the letters written by Kitty. They both corresponded with each other and planned to meet at a particular place. They met and happened to like each other. After a few meeting they were married.

Dubin remembered his mother as a sick woman and he had no sisters. He had a younger brother who had drowned when he was nine years old. After his brother's death, his mother became mentally disturbed. She died when Dubin was thirteen years old. Dubin's father never remarried and he lacked a feminine presence at home. He always enjoyed being alone and loved solitude. After Fanny
her job as a cleaning person in Dubin’s house, he started to feel his loneliness.

Dubin was staggered, as he entered at the surge of loneliness he felt, like acid invading the bone. Ridiculous, he thought. Standing at the foot of the stairs the biographer, shaken, tried to puzzle out what was affecting him. As a rule he enjoyed solitude. Being away from home, or occasionally remaining alone there, awoke moods he rarely experienced when his life was geared with Kitty’s. What he felt now was more than a melancholy sense of being alone, or perhaps remembrance of that feeling in the past; this seemed a spontaneous almost soiled awareness, more apparent than ever, of one’s essential aloneness: the self’s separate closed self-conscious subjectivity. Dubin defined it for all time, as previously defined: death’s insistence of its presence in life, history, being. If so, nothing new but why once more at this moment? (40)

Dubin felt that once he became familiar with Fanny, this feeling of loneliness would evade him. Fanny promised to meet Dubin in a particular hotel at New York. Dubin and Fanny planned for a rendezvous at Venice. Instead of the anticipated sexual pleasures, Dubin returned home more frustrated and agonized. During the week in Venice Fanny was sick with diarrhea and was vomiting. Dubin had to nurse her like a mother. Dubin’s agony increased when he spotted his daughter Maud with an aged man in Venice. Dubin chased them to find out if the girl was his daughter. When he turned again the couples were shadows in the fog. Dubin’s attempt to trace his erring daughter in Venice became a futile attempt. Dubin wondered how his daughter had grown faster though he still thought of her
to be a child yet. "So soon out of the crib, so quickly grown-bleeding, breasted, gone-lost to me. Out of the house at eighteen; at nineteen as deeply as he into amorous intrigue? How is it possible-the hunger to adventure in contravention of times good sense?" (64 -65) Dubin felt guilty that a man of his age should flirt with a girl of his daughter's age. When Dubin came back to the hotel he was dejected to see Fanny in bed with a young man, Dubin broke up with Fanny and returned home to Kitty.

Dubin's father Charlie was a waiter and he always worked in Jewish dairy restaurants. He was an earnest and infinitely patient man. He gave good service but he was not endearing to the customers as other waiters did. He led a simple and meagre life. Dubin's mother Hannah in her late thirties was mentally sick after her son died at the age of nine. She was a thin redheaded woman who was always whispering and she was frightened of every thing. She sat in a dark room and spoke in whispers. Charlie didn't send her to the hospital for he feared that she would suffer more in the hospital. Hannah died at the age of forty as an anguished woman. Dubin remembered his mother as an insane woman. He preferred to forget memories of his mother. After his mother's death Dubin was uncertain about his future. In his work and in his personal life Dubin had continuously encountered failure.

If your trains on the wrong track every station you come to is the wrong station. The wrong stops, year after year, were vocation and women he couldn't make it with. It seemed to William Dubin he was not prepared to invest a self in a better self-give up solitude, false dreams, the hold of the past. The train clugged on: the wrong train. (87)
When he was twenty years old Dubin was a romantic youth who often fell in love and lived in dreams. Dubin happened to see Kitty's self-advertisement when he was thirty-one years old. He responded to her letter, as he wanted to break the boredom of living alone. When Dubin met Kitty she was modestly beautiful and was recovering from the trauma caused by her husband's death in his fortieth year due to leukemia.

Kitty met her first husband Nathaniel when she was in college. Nathaniel was a doctor and he treated Kitty's wound caused by a bike accident. She got married when she was an undergraduate. Gerald was born after three years of married life. She often complained to Dubin her misery when she lost her husband unexpectedly and how heart broken she was as her contented family life broke into pieces. She confided to Dubin her miserable childhood. Kitty's father committed suicide. Few years later Kitty's mother deserted her and left for Europe with her lover. Orphaned by her mother Kitty was mentally upset and related her dejection to Dubin. "I want you to know what my young life was like. There's a gap in me I will never fill. I've never slept well since I was little. Either a gene is missing or I'm afraid to for understandable reasons" (5). Kitty suffered from insomnia and feared that she would die young and feared that she might be affected by cancer. She was easily frustrated by new sounds. The sound of water dripping from the tap woke her from sleep. She feared gas leak and smelled the burners often.

After Maud was born Kitty and Dubin lived happily. Dubin adopted Gerry as his own son. Dubin started to write biographies and was able to provide better for his family. Though Kitty was happy and contended, "She lived with her fears could not live without them lived above them" (96). They bought a house at
Center Campobello and settled there since Kitty felt that the city was not a proper place to bring up their children. Gerald grew up as a loner; he was more quiet and secretive. When he was fifteen years old, he accused his parents for not understanding him. He was contemptuous of the war and after quitting the graduate school he decided to go to Canada and register as a war resister but later decided against it. He went to West Germany for training prior to Vietnam. He worked as a signal corps instructor in West Germany. Just three months before his term of enlistment could get over Gerald went to Sweden.

After bidding goodbye to Fanny at Venice Dubin went to visit Gerald at Sweden. Dubin nostalgically remembered the days when Gerry loved Dubin as his own father. Dubin legally adopted Gerry and his name was changed to Gerald Dubin. As a young boy Gerald was intensely affectionate to Dubin. When Dubin tried to locate Gerry at Stockholm he came to know that Gerry had changed his name to Gerry Willis from Gerald Dubin. Dubin said to the landlady; “Willis was his father’s name – he’s entitled to it. I’m his adoptive father, William Dubin a biographer” (91). Dubin finally located Gerald and with concern questioned his future plans. Though Gerry seemed to be astonished he was not pleased at seeing Dubin. Gerry preferred not to answer most of Dubin’s questions. Dubin compelled Gerry to write a letter to his mother once in a while. Gerald said that since they didn’t approve of his decision of quitting the army, he didn’t care to inform them about himself. Dubin compelled Gerry to come back home since there were chances of amnesty being given to the army deserters. Gerald started to walk very fast and Dubin trodden behind him. Gerald didn’t have the courtesy to talk to his
adoptive father. In order to avoid Dubin he walked away from him after conversing for a few minutes standing in the street in a rainy night.

Back home Dubin felt guilty for having lied to Kitty who was always honest. Dubin tried to keep Kitty in good humour and was affectionate to her. He approved Kitty's decision of working part-time with Roger Foster in a library. He carried on his regular routine of exercise; long walks and his work on Lawrence progressed well. But Fanny's letter disturbed his poise of mind. He tore her letter and never felt like answering any of her letters. He regretted that, "A thoughtless girl, careless of him, had made jackass of Dubin, shamed him as he hadn't ever been" (117).

Dubin and Kitty missed their children's presence acutely. Whenever Kitty chanced upon their children's photograph she wiped away a secret tear from her eyes. Dubin nostalgically remembered the days when the children were young and how he enjoyed their childhood along with them. He went to the attic where the children often played and searched among the abandoned dolls a valentine card drawn in red - crayons and addressed to Dubin by Maud. "He had wanted one of Maud's affectionate notes as a child to keep in his pocket. The uses of the dwindling past..." (120).

Dubin was unable to get rid of the memories of Fanny. He just wondered why he was giving much importance to Fanny while in reality she was just a stranger to him. His work and his daily routine were affected. Once as he was walking in the woods thinking about Fanny he got lost and was rescued by Kitty. Dubin's mind was often occupied with remembrance of his time with Fanny. Kitty complained that Dubin was indifferent to her; "You seem to want nothing I have
to give. You hide your life, whispering what I can’t hear. You’re not affectionate. We never really talk to each other” (145 – 146).

Kitty often confided to Dubin that she remembered the most trivial things of her life with Nathaniel. When they were newly married she spoke about Nathaniel, herself and Gerry as a child and Dubin lacked a sense of belongingness, “He felt again as though he had married her marriage” (161). As years went by Dubin was least affected when Kitty spoke about Nathaniel and reminisces her life with him.

Maud came home for a short visit. Dubin was depressed when he saw that Maud had shorn her beautiful long red hair and dyed them black. Maud resembled Kitty but the red hair she had inherited from Dubin’s mother. She was curiously impatient with her childhood and hurried after experience. She went to study at Berkeley and she returned home infrequently. One summer she worked at Mexico and the next she worked as a Professor’s research assistant. She preferred to work and earn by herself and didn’t like to depend on her parents. Dubin suspected that Maud was trying to hide something from him. He also doubted that the girl whom he saw in Venice with the old man might have been his daughter. Dubin wondered: “Who is she, nervously clumping around in boots and poncho, who comes as my child, though I can hardly recognise her? What have we become to each other, who were once so much more than we presently are?”(165) Dubin felt that his children had suddenly grown and had changed completely. They had deserted their home and have gone to pursue their future. Dubin spoke to Maud and tried to make her understand that her presence would make him happy and made her promise that she would stay more closely in touch with her parents.
Dubin changed his study to the barn and started working there without any disturbance. Kitty complained that Dubin had immersed himself in the process of writing Lawrence's biography and was neglecting her. Kitty not only felt lonely but she also sensed that something was going wrong in their relationship for they had stopped talking to each other. Kitty said: "Being home when the children needed me was a time of privilege and grace. Now that they’re grown I wish I had some useful work to do" (184). Kitty informed him that she was visiting the psychiatrist Evan Odynk for self-analysis. Dubin felt sorry for Kitty's loneliness and sorrow and appreciated her idea of visiting Odynk for counseling.

Nearly after a year Dubin met Fanny on his walk in the woods. She said that she was living in Roger's house. She said that they were friends and she was not contemplating any idea of marrying him. They walked together in the woods and Dubin taught her the names of the wild flowers. With Fanny, Dubin was able to be humorous but with Kitty he was always serious. "With Kitty, their anxieties meshed, highlighting the serious life. That's the way it is: you marry a serious woman the chances are increased of a serious fate; a lighter type laughs every ten minutes and takes you with her" (196).

From Venice Fanny went to Rome and stayed with her friend Harvey, who was nearly twenty years older than her. Harvey's death had affected her seriously, for he had helped her when she was very young. When Fanny was fifteen years old Harvey's son Mitchell initiated her into the sex life. Fanny loved him and believed that Mitchell too loved her. Harvey found out their affair and threatened his son for impairing the morals of a minor. After breaking away from Mitchell Fanny felt depressed. The only good that came out of her relationship with
Mitchell was that Harvey became her best friend. Since she had decent grades at school she joined college. At seventeen she was depressed, anxious and was also scared that she might become frigid and started to sleep around with strangers. She happened to read a book by Havelock Ellis and it helped her to orient herself differently. She quit college and stayed in the Buddhist commune to discipline herself. There she read the biographies written by Dubin and felt that he could advice her about leading her life in a better way. Dubin explained about D.H Lawrence’s theory of sex as: “Sex should come on us unaware, as a terrible thing of suffering and privilege and mystery” (33). As said by Lawrence, Dubin and Fanny fell a prey to the aura of sexual forces of nature. Fanny gave him the sexual pleasure that she had denied him at Venice.

Dubin started visiting Fanny frequently at New York and their adulterous relationship deepened. Whenever Dubin lied to Kitty he felt guilty but he justified his act by thinking that “I’m not twenty, nor forty – I’m fifty-seven. Surely these years entitle me to this pleasure. In life one daren’t miss what his nature requires. Only the spiritually impoverished can live without adventure” (210). Fanny was working in a private concern and was attending evening college. After his “youth renewing” (41) visits to Fanny, Dubin felt tender towards his wife. He took pains to conceal from his wife that he was having an affair with Fanny.

Kitty and Dubin often spent time talking about their children and worrying about their future. As a child Gerald had specific interests and they expected that he would do mathematical research or he would become a physician like his father. Instead he ended up as a revolutionary living in exile. “What a strange way
for one's own son to be”, Kitty said, “Before you know who he is someone other than you think” (229).

When Dubin was working over his biography at home, Fanny corresponded through letters and occasionally contacted through phone. Fanny came down to Center Campobello for vacation and stayed in a motel. Fanny came to the barn where Dubin had shifted his study at night and left after enjoying few hours of lustful joy. Once Dubin and Fanny were on the verge of being caught red-handed by Kitty, Fanny had to hide until Kitty left the room. In humiliation and anger Fanny left the barn.

Kitty was on the cancer scare again and went to visit the doctor. Kitty had sensed that something had gone wrong in their relationship and suspected that Dubin was having an affair with another woman. Kitty cried bitterly and said that she was sure. Dubin was not ready to wrong Kitty nor was he ready to break his relationship with Fanny. Dubin was bored with Kitty’s “sameness, dissatisfaction eccentricities” and “her fears, her unforgotten, unforgettable past,” (255). In the same way Kitty was also bored with Dubin’s “sobriety, sameness, inability to enjoy life” (255). Dubin promised that he was happy with Kitty and nothing was wrong with him. Dubin tried to hide his affair with Fanny, “but if another woman was the source of his pleasure if you lived on her body – that diminished desire affection – obligation – for the other, the wife. He continued to hide from Kitty his feeling for Fanny, his happy involvement with her, but it did not hide well” (241). When he saw his wife’s aging body he simultaneously thought of Fanny’s youth and Dubin became impotent with his wife. “Dubin wondered if lying, or the habit
of lying could make a man impotent. You lied to someone and couldn't lie with her" (291).

Once when Kitty had gone to Stockholm to visit Gerald, Fanny came to his house to spend that night with him. Dubin didn't allow Fanny to use Kitty's bedroom and she left the house yelling at him that she can't be just a substitute for his lost youth. Fanny was seriously complicating Dubin's life by compelling him to live with her at New York or abroad. Roger Foster had informed Dubin that he was in love with Fanny and intended to marry her if only Dubin gave her up. Dubin thought he had done Fanny a favor by allowing her to walk out of his house as well as his life. Dubin often sighted Roger and Fanny going out together and felt jealous. Fanny sent a note indicating the end of her affair with Dubin. In the letter she had mentioned, "I want someone who wants me. I don't care if we get married or don't but I won't live alone, it hurts too much. I can't see any future for us the way things have been going -- sometimes I think you are blind, William -- so we'd better not see each other any more" (276). Dubin went to New York to meet Fanny but she had changed her residence and his search ended in vain. He had to give up Fanny and he realised that by loving Fanny he had denied love to his family members.

From New York, he went to San Francisco to meet his daughter Maud. Maud was twenty years old but seemed to be forty and suffering. Dubin was very much concerned in finding out what was eating her up and so he cajoled her to trust and confide in him. Dubin felt tormented to see his daughter so sad, lonely and withdrawn. Dubin counseled her to come home and spend sometime with them before deciding about her future. Maud said she would feel more dejected by
seeing her parents trying hard to get along with each other. Maud said she had decided to quit college and join the Zen commune to discipline her self. She said: “I want eventually, satori – true enlightenment, an end to confusion and pain. I’d like to be different than I’ve been I am not looking for, quote, happiness. I want to be in the Isness of the Great Self. I will begin with emptiness” (281). Dubin theorized that Maud might have been in love and was suffering because of the failure of the affair. Dubin thought that it was something simple and that she would get over her sorrow.

Dubin felt that his own daughter has become a stranger. Kitty often worried about Gerald alone in Soviet Union struggling for a livelihood. Dubin was also embittered by his worries about his children. He continued his long walks and recommenced his regular exercise and dieting. He was ashamed for being impotent with his wife. He tried in vain to regain his youth and vitality. “He had entered the age of aging. I shall never recover what I have lost. He feared illness, immobility; the disgrace of death” (318).

In a winter afternoon Maud came home with devastating news to her parents. She said she had an affair with a Black man older than her father and two months pregnant. She was adamant in begetting the child and was not ready to abort it. The man happened to be her Spanish Professor. She didn’t inform her pregnancy to her lover and said that she would live in New York and support herself and her baby and lead a simple life. She was not willing to live with her parents because she felt she had betrayed them, for they had regarded her very highly. Dubin said, “I feel a lot but not betrayed. You’re the one who’s betrayed” (341). Dubin tried to convince Maud and make her understand that she has already
complicated her life. Dubin said that she couldn’t expect to lead a simple life being a single mother with a child alone in New York. While trying to make Maud realise that an unwanted pregnancy is not a privilege but a burden, Dubin lost his temper. Maud vehemently opposed that no one can compel her to abort her baby and left for New York. Kitty accused Dubin for being insensitive and for having chased her out of the house.

Fanny had come back to Center Campobello. With the money she had inherited from her mother she had brought Wilson farm and settled down there as a farmer. In her barn she bred goats and had poultry of twenty red hens. She had also planted a vegetable garden. Dubin went to meet Fanny and tried to renew his intimate relationship with her. Fanny offered her friendship but refused to start an affair with a married man. Dubin spotted Roger often visiting Fanny’s house and felt jealous. He stooped to spying on Fanny and overhearing her conversation with Roger. Dubin some how wooed her with a gift of a gold ring and entangled her into an intimate relationship with him. Dubin’s flesh failed him with Kitty and she accused him: “you’re doing this to punish me?” (333) She said that they were not passionately in love with each other when they got married and so instead of being happy they had missed more by being married to each other. Dubin initially thanked his wife for pointing out what he lacked in life. Dubin found out that Kitty was having affairs with Evan Odynk. Later Kitty confessed to Dubin and said that she had stopped seeing Odynk. She said that only because Dubin was insensitive she went to the extent of having an affair with Odynk.

Gerald had sent a letter to his parents through a friend in the French Embassy. Gerald was taken to Soviet Union from Stockholm, in Moscow he was
trained to work with coding and decoding electronic equipment. He was disgusted with the inhuman treatment in Russia and requested to be sent back to Sweden. He was discharged without pay and was being traced by the Russian police. Gerald was starving and was hoping to land in a prison if he was lucky. The heart-rending letter from Gerald made his parents more anxious. Dubin promised to take Kitty to Russia and help her to trace Gerald.

Fanny was busy working in the farm and it consumed all her time. Fanny sometimes felt that she should get married and beget a child before she became too old. Fanny felt that she should pursue a worthwhile career in life. She had completed her B.A degree and was planning to study law. She had experience working as a secretary in a law office. She was not willing to sell the farm for studying law. Fanny was extremely happy when Dubin said that Fanny could study law by clerking in a law office and need not attend a law school. Dubin explained that his friend’s wife, Ursula Habersham was a senator and she was trying to renew her law office and was interested in appointing Fanny as her clerk. Fanny felt that Dubin could stay three days at her place and four days with his wife alternatively. The novel ends with Dubin going back to his wife with love and thereby giving a chance to Roger Faster who is in love with Fanny.

The novel God’s Grace opens with the description of the devastated landscape and the havoc caused by humanity. Calvin Cohn a paleontologist was working in an oceanographic research vessel along with many scientists in the deep sea. The thermonuclear war started few minutes after Cohn’s oceanographic vessel descended to the bottom of the sea. The ship’s peril light continuously signaled to ‘Ascent’. All the ships crew except Calvin Cohn deserted the ship in
peril. It took twenty minutes for the submersible ship to come to the surface of the ocean but within such short span of time humanity had destroyed itself and all kind of animal life on the surface of the earth.

Cohn realised “Humanity had done itself” (God’s Grace 9). The wind carried the ashes of the destruction and the water was full of dead fish and animal bodies. The faceless and formless God spoke to Cohn through a crack in a big cloud. God said that he had allowed Calvin Cohn alone to survive the destruction. God admonished Cohn, not to have any false expectation since God had not devised any plans for reviving the human race, which had defiled itself, and the survival of Cohn was just an error and nothing else. Cohn asked God how after he had promised Noah that he will not destroy the earth in water had again drowned the earth in water. Cohn begged God to save the world and humanity. God answered Cohn that in the past He had patiently endured man’s wrong doings: Man had destroyed the purity of wind, water and earth and thereby destroyed their means of survival. God said His endurance isn’t endless and it has reached saturation. God said:

The present Devastation, ending in smoke and dust, comes as a consequence of man’s self – betrayal. From the beginning, when I gave them the gift of life, they were perversely greedy for death. At last I thought, I will give them death because they were engrossed in evil. (5)

Cohn begged God to save the world through some miracle. God mocked that to revive humanity he would need more than a miracle. Cohn then requested God to allow him alone to live on. God permitted Cohn to “live quickly a few deep breaths and go your way. Beyond that lies nothing for you” (6). With these
words God vanished away. Though Cohn wept bitterly for being left alone in the world yet he rejoiced at the chance given to him to live for he was still passionate to survive.

The ship's engine had stopped throbbing and it was floating in the endless water. Cohn missed the human voice and presence and so spoke loudly to himself. He had no future to look forward to for God had given him a little time to live and shortly his life would be snapped away. Cohn wondered why human life meant so little to God. He mourned his lonely fate on the earth. "He awoke mourning human being, human existence, all the lives lost.... He mourned civilization, goodness, daring, joy; and all that man had done well" (10).

After a few days Cohn found an amicable chimpanzee in the ship. The scientist Dr. Walter Bunder abandoned the chimp during the time of peril. The scientist was conducting some research with the chimp. In his notebooks he had recorded the sign language he had taught the chimp. Cohn said to the chimp that they both were left alone in the world and all life has been destroyed. The chimp responded by beating his chest and expressing his sorrow. Thus the chimp and Cohn started to communicate and to co-exist. Cohn went to Dr. Bunder's room to search for notes. The chimp stepped into a metal cage, shut the door and snapped the lock to show Cohn that it was his home. The door got locked and Cohn was not able to find the key. The animal frantically rattled the cage. Cohn heartily laughed at the suffering of the animal. This scene brings out the inherent sadistic pleasure lurking in man's nature. Later Cohn broke open the cage and released the frightened animal. From the notes of Dr. Bunder, Cohn came to know that the chimp was named as Gottlob. Since Cohn was a Jew and as he now owned the
chimp he renamed it as Buz. A cloth was wound around the Chimps neck. The animal tucked below his neck cloth and gave Cohn a broken chain with a crucifix. Cohn wondered what religion would mean to an animal. Though Cohn was the only man living in the world he felt that one religion would suffice. The chimp made signs as if it protested the change of name. Cohn sited flowers floating in the water and he hoped that land was somewhere nearby. Both Cohn and Buz reached the land and thought that God had permitted him to live longer.

Cohn and Buz reached the thickly vegetated island. Though animal life had vanished, the trees bore flowers and fruits. Cohn was not able to trace the young ape. Cohn chose a large cave as his shelter. Cohn very meticulously cleaned the cave. He built a hut outside the cave and he built a table, cot and rocker with the tools he had carted from the ship. Even though he was completely engaged in constructing a shelter for himself, the loneliness and silence hurt him. He reflected upon his lonely fate and felt that it was better than death. Though he suffered intensely still he was passionate to live on. Cohn reflected on his fate thus:

"Can I call this life?"

Better than death

Why bother?

"Because I breathe." (33-34)

Cohn was affected by radiation and was in coma for many days. He started losing all his hair and vitality. An unknown benefactor daily left him fruits, sugarcane and coconuts. Slowly he recovered and journeyed along with Buz by the rubber raft to the wrecked ship to transport things that would be of use to him. Cohn took with him the works of William Shakespeare, encyclopedia and
dictionary. Buz was adamant in bringing the cage ashore. The next time when Cohn went to the reef, the broken vessel was washed away. "And Cohn felt sadness at the final loss of the ship, the last home he had in a homeless world" (42).

There was no sign of any living creature existing in the island. Cohn had enough to eat. There were many fruit bearing trees in the island. Cohn constructed a paddy field and irrigated it. After four months he harvested a crop and planted another. Though Cohn kept himself busy, the situation was getting on his nerves. The loneliness was unbearable and he yearned for companionship. He expressed his suffering to Buz.

I'm not referring to existential loneliness, you understand – what might be called awareness of one's essentially subjective being, not without some sense of death in-life, if you know what I mean. I'm talking; rather, about the loneliness one feels when he lacks companionship or the sense of company that derives from community. (52)

Cohn said that he belongs to a lineage of rabbi. Since he was an atheist for some time he lacked interest in religion. He became a scientist because he was fascinated by the mysteries of creation. Buz pointed to a button in his belly and tried to speak. His neck tendons under the decaying cloth bulged as he strained but he was not able to speak. Cohn played a phonograph of his father praying to God in order to pacify Buz. They spotted a Gorilla listening to the music. "Cohn wondered how many more apes, large or small, he must confront if the Lord's computer had stopped telling Him the numerical truth" (61).
One morning Cohn, stealthily went near Buz and snipped off his decaying neck cloth. Cohn was surprised to see two flat copper wires had grown out of the scar where a man's Adam's apple would be. Dr. Bunder had performed an operation on Buz and he was able to speak with the artificial larynx. Cohn was excited to hear the animal speak. Buz said that he could have spoken without the operation being done. Buz told him: "We talg among ourselves // May be someday you will hear our phonemes or we hear yours // If you can communicate with one living animal // You can communicate with all his relations // It is pozzziable if you will admit the pozzzibility // (66).

Cohn tightened Buz's neck wires and that ended the pong pong sound at the end of each sentence. Buz started to master the language and his articulation improved. Cohn, to his astonishment found five more chimpanzees on a tree. Cohn hoped to lead the inhabitants of the Island, which consisted of six chimps, one gorilla and himself. He hoped to set up rules and regulation for governing the chimps and explained the functioning of American constitution to Buz. The language proficiency of Buz made Cohn hope for a better future. Cohn felt egoistic and started to address the fellow inhabitants that he has reluctantly accepted leadership since he was the only person who has talent for administration and decent education. He also announced that he proposed to establish a social community in the Island. But the chimpanzee showed least interest in Cohn's lecture.

Buz taught the new chimps to speak English language. He named the female chimp as Mary Mandelyn and had named all the sother chimps. Cohn decided to make his life purposeful by establishing a social community by
educating the chimps about their obligations and responsibilities so that they may interact among themselves and fulfill their social contract.

Cohn felt he ought to try to educate them up to some decent level. Eventually to make them aware of the cosmos and of mankind, too, who had fallen from earth and cosmos, because men had failed each other in obligations and responsibilities – failed to achieve brotherhood, lost their lovely world, not to mention living lives. (128)

Cohn established a school tree and lectured the chimps about the cause for man’s failure so that in future they may avoid the errors committed by mankind. He taught the chimps for six days and on the seventh day he preferred to take rest. The male chimps in the island lusted after the female chimp, Mary Madelyn. But she preserved her virginity for Cohn and claimed that she was in love with him. Cohn remembered that in Deuteronomy it is said: “Cursed be he who lies with any kind of beast” (161). He also felt that he could love the female chimp as he would love his dog. Inspite of his deliberations Cohn copulated with the female chimp expecting that the combination of man – chimp child would result in complete humanization of the chimps. Cohn created seven commandments and admonished the chimps to follow them. Mary Madelyn gave birth to a humanoid infant. The inhabitants of the Island came to see the baby. Buz showed a negative interest in the child. Buz who formerly called Cohn as his ‘Dod’ now claimed that he had no relative in the Island community “Cohn felt unwillingly left out – omitted, deeply disappointed” (181).

Eight baboon monkeys that had escaped the nuclear devastation inhabited the Island. The chimps looked upon the baboons as inferior and dirty. The chimp
Esau and others planned to hunt and eat the little baboon girl monkey Sara. Buz ran to inform Cohn but he was not able to meet him. Buz collected the remains of Sara in a sack and handed it over to Cohn. Cohn ordered a funeral and public mourning to stress the need for respecting and valuing the sanctity of life. Cohn reprimanded the chimps for resorting to menial activities like murder instead of moving towards evolutionary advance.

Esau was envious of Cohn for preventing them of their natural pleasures while he lived with Mary Ma^delyn. Esau decided to kill Cohn and become the Alpha male of the Island. Esau pounced on Cohn with the intention of killing him. Mary Ma^delyn saved Cohn’s life by hitting Esau’s head with a hammer. Cohn felt himself a failure. “I have failed to teach these chimpanzees a basic truth. How can they survive if they do to fellow survivors what men did to each other before the Second Flood? How will they evolve into something better than men? (203)

All the chimps, headed by Esau entered the cave and carried away Rebeka, Cohn’s child. Mary Ma^delyn pleaded in tearful tones and promised to give anything to them but to return her innocent baby. Cohn felt heart broken when he saw Buz among them. The chimps resorted to throwing and catching the child with her parents following. The whole day Mary Ma^delyn was swaying from tree to tree in search of her child and Cohn pursued on the ground with outstretched arms to catch the child. By nightfall the chimps dropped the baby from the trees; the child hit a boulder and died. In revenge Cohn cut the wires in Buz’s throat and deprived him of speech.

The chimps including Mary Ma^delyn had resorted to animal nature, behaviour and way of life. They bound Cohn’s hands behind his back with a metal
chain and looped a rope around his neck. The chimps took Cohn to a mountain and set fire to a pile of woods. Buz made Cohn kneel down and was trying to offer Cohn as sacrifice to the Gods. Cohn thanked God for allowing him to live his life completely and died. George, the gorilla said a long Jewish funeral prayer for Cohn.

All Malamud’s heroes depend on external assistance to transcend their selfish nature. In The Natural, Iris Lemon acted as Roy’s mentor and she taught him the value of suffering. Iris’s love for Roy served as a catalyst in his transformation. In The Assistant, Frank Alpine learnt from Morris Bobber the important role suffering plays in human lives. His love for Helen persuaded him to persevere in the process of his transformation. In A New Life, Levin was guided by the true love of Pauline to a life of happiness and contentment. His love for Pauline gave him moral strength and courage to accept suffering. In The Fixer, Yakov Bok realises the spirit and meaning of suffering from the exemplary life led by Shmuel. Only when he readily accepts Raisl’s child as his own he realises the meaningfulness of the suffering he had undergone. In The Tenants both the heroes, Harry Lesser and Willie Spearmint failed to realise the meaning of suffering, as Irene fails to enlighten them about the value of life. Thus they end up as failures unable to transcend their selfish nature. In Dubin’s Lives, Fanny Bick’s compassion towards Kitty makes Dubin realise his responsibility as a husband and he returns to his wife with love.

Suffering educates the characters to accept their past life. The protagonists of Malamud’s novels have a shameful past. Life gains meaning when they identify their shameful past as part of their life. They are spiritually reborn when they
assume responsibility for their past mistakes. But the paradox of life is that they find the roots of their new self in their past. Iris Lemon in The Natural has made her suffering meaningful because she identified her shameful past as a part of her life. But Roy tried to hide his past from the public and he never liked to think about his past life. Since he was unwilling to accept his past he was destined to suffer again. He learned the potential of suffering only at a later stage. Frank Alpine, the hero of The Assistant was aware of the fact that he could attain redemption for his past sins only by accepting his accountability for his past failures. He achieved moral transcendence by confessing his guilt to Morris Bober and Helen. After Morris's death he prepared himself to suffer for Helen's sake. Levin in A New Life confessed his past to Pauline. He attained salvation because he readily sacrificed his job for the sake of Pauline. Yakov Bok in The Fixer embarked on disaster by rejecting his Jewish identity. He escaped from the Pale and his Jewish background expecting good luck in the city. By hiding his past he ended up as a prisoner. Yakov abused Raisl for the failure of their married life. He realised the usefulness of his life when he accepted his own mistakes. Yakov accepted the illegitimate child of Raisl as his own in order to atone his past mistakes. In The Tenants, Willie Spearmint tried to throw off his tormented past by recording his past trauma in the form of art. Willie's Black consciousness forms the theme of his fiction. Willie failed as an artist because he was unable to overcome his ethnicity and encompass humanity at large. Lesser's writing is more egoistic and subjective in nature. His writing is a replica of his own search for the self. Though he is a Jew he is unable to identify himself with the suffering multitudes. He fails as an artist because self-transcendence becomes impossible
for him, as he is unable to understand the social obligation of an artist. In Dubin's Lives, William Dubin is very much concerned with his writing as a biographer and overrides his responsibility as a father and a husband. Dubin refuses to accept responsibility for his past failures and thereby he condemns himself to further failure and frustration. In God's Grace, Cohn, the lone survivor struggles to create an ideal society among the brutes. His attempt ends in failure as he himself resorts to violence in order to take revenge on those who murdered his child. He resorted to the past mistake of humanity, which led to total destruction of the whole world.

The metamorphoses of the characters are complete when they gain a historical consciousness, which helps them to get emancipated from their community's historical pain and anguish. In The Assistant, Bober's definition of a Jew as a man who willingly suffers for others educates Frank Alpine and enhances his moral and spiritual values of life. In The Natural, Roy's metamorphosis takes place when he realises his personal success and failure has a tremendous effect on his numerous fans. In The Fixer, the heart broken Yakov Bok finds a meaning to the severe hardship he faced for nearly three years in solitary imprisonment when he understands that he was representing his community and that his fortitude will help his suffering brethren to escape from the impending pogrom, the Russian government had been planning. In A New Life, Levin's triumph lies in his courage to suffer for his family and to march towards a healthy future. In The Tenants, Willie Spearmint is the core of Black consciousness. He fails to discern the subtle difference between an artist and activist. Though he recognises his community's agony, he is unable to represent it in the form of art. Harry Lesser stays imprisoned within his egoistic self. He yearns to create universality in art but fails
to understand the travails of the people around him and thus fails as an individual and as an artist.

Malamud’s heroes do not rebel nor fight against the hostile forces around them; they rather prefer to remain victims prepared to suffer for others. Suffering gets refracted on the prism of life and by observing the changes suffering brings about in their personality; the characters learn to bear the burden of this earthly life with dignity. Suffering nourishes the soul and kindles the moral and spiritual strength and disciplines the self. Malamud showed a great regard for Jewish tradition, as he was concerned with the plight of the suffering multitude. Encyclopedia of World Biography suggests that Bernard Malamud’s works are imbued with the theme of moral regeneration through suffering.

Malamud sees this suffering for others as the ultimate test of humanity, and he is only half joking when he recasts the New Testament phrase about the lilies of the field. “Consider the Jewish lily that toils and spins”. Malamud's heroes rarely unclove the shackles of suffering and many like Frank Alpine and Yakov Bok, deliberately as... Malamud’s stories and novels, in which reality and fantasy are frequently interlaced, have been compared to parables, myths and allegories and often illustrate the importance of moral obligation.

<http://www.bookrags.com/biography/Bernard-malamud-xx>

Malamud says of his own heroes: “A Malamud character is someone who fears his fate, is caught up in it, yet manages to outrun it. He is the subject and object of laughter and pity” (Shenker 22).
Malamud disapproves the present society where honesty and virtue are immaterial and what counts is material success. Success in the Malamudian opus lies in the characters’ ability to retain their humanity even in such hostile circumstances. The characters are under the delusion that life is a blue bird of happiness but suffering educates them that life cannot be a shadowy straight lane but it keeps unfolding unperceived twists and turns. The characters start to grow morally only when they break free from their egoistic selfish nature and when they become sensitive towards other’s sufferings. As human beings men are entitled to struggle and suffer; one need not censure suffering because suffering is a privilege conferred on mankind for it ennobles the spirit by making it selfless. “That is what each novel finally affirms is that the freedom to live to discover a new life, is not merely the freedom to experience, but also ironically the freedom to struggle and the freedom to suffer”(Astro 76).

Many critics of Malamud have noted that the common motif recurring in his works is the “Prison motif”. Malamud’s characters from Roy Hobbs to Calvin Cohn persist in being within their self-imposed imprisonment as victims. They are literally trapped in a lonely grocery in the case of Morris Bober and Frank Alpine; a worn-out academic atmosphere in the case of Levin, a barren tenement in The Tenants, actual jail in The Fixer, a lonely study room in the case of Dubin or a lonely Island in God’s Grace. They are not crushed by their unworthy existence but they achieve an inner freedom by expanding their compassionate nature. As victims they learn to endure suffering without complaining and in turn they gain the moral strength to sustain the humanistic outlook on life.
Jewish novelists were inspired by the theory that suffering redeems life and makes it meaningful which was evident from the painful traumatic conditions through which the Jews live in the past. Malamud’s works revolve around the theme of meaningful suffering. Sidney Richman names this theme as “redemptive suffering”. Suffering redeems the sufferer as well as those for whom he suffers.

Jewish history and tradition, World War II and subsequent horrors of the Holocaust inspired Malamud and all these have an impact on his writings. As a Jew he started to identify himself with the sufferings faced by the numerous Jews in Europe. He explained: “I was concerned with what Jews stood for, with their getting down to the bare bones of things. I was concerned with their ethnicality how Jews felt they had to live in order to go on living”.

Malamud is concerned with the moral aspect of suffering and its effect upon the personality of the characters. Through suffering Malamud’s characters attain an altruistic and compassionate nature. Malamud’s approach to suffering has made him unique among other Jewish American writers. Janna Malamud Smith writes about the influence of Jewish tradition on her father in her biography My Father is a Book as follows:

Malamud had escaped the fate of his parents, but could not escape his tradition. There seemed to have been a dybbuck inhabiting him from beyond the pale, suggesting the phantom endurance of disembodied familial traditions, severed during immigration but extant in an invisible continuity with the past.
To Bernard Malamud suffering was a source that enriched the ethical values and spiritual strength of humanity. He firmly believed that life lacks its lustre if suffering is excluded from life. By admitting and accepting suffering with dignity we enlarge and enrich our lives. The idea that humanity at large is susceptible to suffering underlies Malamud's fiction. He explains his stance as: "All men are Jews, though they may not know it" (Avery 45). Suffering has inspired people from time immemorial. Jesus and Job have become archetypal figures of suffering for their life had led to the growth of the human spirit.

By depicting the suffering of human beings, Malamud has shown men as achievers men but not as losers. In Malamud's fiction, the characters attain success and spiritual maturity only through suffering. Peter L.Hays says that Malamud's heroes emerge as "Secular saints" from "hellish depths of human misery" (219). Malamud's novels provide a positive and practical view of suffering. By accepting the burden of life and by undergoing hardships, the characters elevate suffering to a moral virtue. Suffering gains meaning only when it highlights man's potential for self – sacrifice. The beauty of the human soul will be enhanced only when a person willingly accepts suffering for others. A bare rock will attain a beautiful form only when it is chiseled. Likewise human soul will gain beauty and spiritual power only by experiencing the bruises and pangs of suffering.