ENLIGHTENMENT

But the Kingdom is within you
and it is without you.
If you will know yourselves,
then you will be known
But if you do not know yourselves,
then you are in poverty
and you are poverty.

The Gospel According to Thomas

True Freedom and the Self

There is a curious fact that in the midst of all the joys, sorrows, difficulties and struggles each and every individual attempts a journey towards true freedom. True freedom lies in knowing the true self and it is also the awareness of the soul or the inner light within. The possibility of realizing the authentic self may be dimmed, hindered and prevented by material ties, therefore it may not be possible to relinquish the idea of true freedom. Life and its actions would be of no value if the idea of true freedom remains unknown. Every moment nature enslaves us and prevents the possibility of gaining true freedom. Material life imprisons one’s true self. The steps towards true freedom may be knocked down by degradation and disintegration, yet at the same time some inner voice can initiate the idea of true freedom. True freedom is gained by surpassing all
difficulties. Any individual existing with the true self seeks true freedom. The seeker of true freedom exists with an intense cosmic concern, ever voicing and seeking the welfare of humanity.

**Modern Life and Consciousness**

The novels of Bellow *Humboldt's Gift* and *The Dean's December* have been interpreted as those in which the heroes make intense attempt at transcendence, true freedom. The protagonists appear to have an Hegelian understanding that the spirit of their time is infused in them, and the central business of these heroes is to probe into it. In the novels like *Mr. Sammler's Planet*, Bellow raises the question of degradation of the late twentieth century civilization, and it is grotesquerie and monstrosity. In his novels *Humboldt's Gift* and *The Dean's December* he sustains the same theme, but he searches out new modes, new speculations about how to apprehend and transcend decay and disintegration. The novels are seen to contain in them transcendental overtones. They also characterize Bellow's new form of fiction in which he juxtaposes history and cosmic concerns. These novels bring out the apocalyptic conditions of the seventies and eighties. The thrust in the novels is to seek and know how to exist in them, where to find solace, what options to exercise and accommodate, in order to redeem humanity from the shackles of degrading values. On these grounds Malcolm Bradbury considers them as
the transcendent novels. He further observes in his book on contemporary writers, Saul Bellow:

The next two books, "Humboldt's Gift" (1975) and "The Dean's December" to date his newest novel...had always been shaped by concern with the states of modern history and the condition of modern consciousness – consciousness formed, as he puts it in "The Dean's December", by the Hegelian understanding that tells us that the spirit of our time must be in us by nature. That spirit...in that liberated post romantic self...there is secreted an obscenity, a new barbarism and decadence...which defeats any hope of our discovering a truly felt human nature. (84)

Based on the above statement Bellow's last novel "The Dean's December" calls for an appropriateness of "catastrophe exposure" by which a larger soul may exist in the present apocalyptics, challenge it and go beyond it.

In the earlier novels of Bellow the heroes make the quest for goodness and they show dissatisfaction with the present condition. In Mr. Sammler's Planet the protagonist expresses the same desire which is to be free from the bondage of the ordinary and the finite. He wishes to say good-bye to his planet, the earth. Bellow has pursued this same new
sensibility in his transcendent novels. He depicts the aspirations of the protagonists to go beyond the anxious human condition through their acts of generosity and meditative endeavors. The heroes are found to exist with endless self-questioning. They live in an age of mass post-cultural energy, romantic expectation, cities affected by exploited power and deprived crime in which old cultural values seem to be swept away. The protagonists look for a new feeling and by self-questioning attempt to find man’s fundamental nature. They aim to understand the larger soul beyond explanation.

The protagonists aim to work and to bring about changes in the nature of humanity through encounters with the cosmos as well as with the depths of the individual psyche. They wish to remain human in a dehumanized society. They reveal an active quest for human renewal. The analysis of Bellow’s survival novels like Herzog and Mr. Sammler’s Planet depict the protagonists as those who go through several ordeals before the knowledge of the soul or self emerges in them, whereas in Humboldt’s Gift and The Dean’s December the protagonists represent an affirmation of that knowledge at the beginning. Due to this knowledge they long to bring about a great change in the world in which they live. They expose the brutalities in life and they are affected and victimized by others’ greed for money. The experience that life offers shapes their self.
Finally they learn the truth that the world and the people living in it, their attitudes and their way of living cannot be altered within a limited period. So they adapt for themselves a place where they can find and experience the voice of the true self.

The heroes appear to show an eagerness to mobilize man’s concrete being or the importance of the self. Their activities are directed towards the effort to find and locate an ethical standard in the individual, “one collective consciousness of people, in the sense that if the intuition is properly trained or the consciousness properly oriented, it will find the imagination to say what is right” (Yadav 96). The protagonists of these novels make a spirited resistance to the forces of their time, the contemporary conditions.

American life was affected by various factors and suffered many setbacks. The war and its outcome made a great impact on the people. People in general grew cynical and sought for the expression of the self. Success was counted by wealth and status. Crime and violence was on the increase, on the whole there was a great social and ethical transformation as regards modes of living and moral values. The American world seemed to exist in a state of nihilism, despair, negation and nausea. So the novelist focuses his attention on the need for belief which is the belief that man is capable of recognizing and realizing his place in the cosmic
order. John Aldridge has stated in his critical work on *Humboldt's Gift* that Bellow expresses a strong faith that man can attain self-understanding and transformation. And that man can overcome the limitations of his individuality and recognize his place in the social order. This observation is reflected in the novel *Humboldt's Gift* with great moral force and intellectual vigor. Bellow insists that the authentic self in man would attempt to find a better social order.

**Charlie Citrine's Life**

The novel *Humboldt’s Gift* is one of the well-known novels of Bellow written during the fourth period and has been worthy to be awarded the noble prize. It is the story of an artist in search of success. It has two heroes—Von Humboldt Fleisher and Citrine—the latter is a successful playwright. The former is superior to Citrine and dies in poverty and despair. Citrine is the narrator and he shows a great deal of loyalty to the deceased. But he is caught up in the world of money, power, violence and abuse. He is a writer of contingencies rather than of grand abstractions. His wife files a case and he is taken to the law court for divorce and alimony. A racketeer smashes his Mercedes to recover a gamble-debt, while his wife is working for a Ph.D on Humboldt. He has other responsibilities like supporting his brother and relations. He gives a decent burial to his senior Humboldt. All these events make him realize
that in the American culture, everything-love, marriage, sex, friendship is a cash-nexus relation. These events drive him towards ethical and philosophical concerns. He strives to overcome these connections, hence attempts to concentrate on meditation to know the voice of his soul.

**Charlie Citrine and Von Humboldt Fleisher**

The protagonist of *Humboldt's Gift* ventures to make frequent references to God, Soul and seeks true freedom. The main protagonist of this novel on whom the plot is made is Charlie Citrine. He meets and develops friendship with Von Humboldt Fleisher. Many years Von Humboldt Fleisher and Citrine remain as best friends, Citrine finds Humboldt to be, "An avant - garde writer, the first of a new generation...handsome, fair, large, serious, witty...learned...revealed to me new ways of doing things. I was ecstatic" (1). He is impressed by the intellectual splendor of Humboldt who exhibits knowledge of Yeats, Freud and Gertrude Stein’s ideas. Later he also develops this same intellectual synthesis of Humboldt. At times he avoids the world of distractions that threatens to dehumanize the individual. But he craves for audience. This brings him into the distracting society, into the industrial U.S.A. He yearns for a compromise between head and heart, culture and capital.
Charlie's memories of Humboldt escalate his awareness of his own decline, which resembles Humboldt's. Though he has received public recognitions two Pulitzer prizes, the French order of Chevalier, his picture on the cover of the *Time*, his name in Who's Who, the invitations to the White House, he feels he is declining in creative efforts. He has lost sight of his original ambition to improve the world. He gives the public what it wants. His life style, marked by the material symbols of success cannot hold his interest. Therefore, he fears artistic stagnation that destroyed Humboldt by distracting him with money and sex. Hence, Charlie breaks out his complacency through an honest appraisal of his own life to Humboldt. Humboldt, the great poet of America acts as a metaphysical mirror to Citrine's suppressed fears and guides him in his own recovery, from the opulence of false successes.

Later Humboldt who uplifts Citrine's career faces degradation. He loses his value through money and sex. Finally he faces death. Citrine also fears a similar fate. Hence he seeks immortality. He ponders over the question of death. He finally concludes that death cannot wipe away individuals like Humboldt. Eventually, he realizes the truth that the spirit would always exist, "the white radiance of eternity quivering in the intense inane and so on" (3). He senses that the same spirit can also be a "Maya".
The meeting of Citrine and Humboldt has a great impact on the former. Citrine comes to know what he must do through Humboldt, even after Humboldt's death. The loyalty to the deceased motivates him to attain the knowledge of doing good which is the outcome of the awareness of the true self. It can also be equated to the idea of true freedom.

A Bond of Friendship

Citrine attempts to make desperate longing to do good and establish the concept of goodness. Hence he muses on the activities of the outside world which is not interested in "inner miracles". Humboldt appears to be the antagonist of Citrine, a distorted image of the latter, an exaggeration of the best and worst elements in the personality of Citrine and a reminder of his youthful ideals. At the beginning of the novel Citrine is shown in crisis. His emotional, financial and intellectual conditions begin to disintegrate. Denise the wife of Citrine files a suit in the court, claims divorce and maintenance. This restricts his freedom and limits his cash flow. His mistress Renata who is sensuous and beautiful exhausts his finance by living an extravagant and fashionable life style. She takes a travel throughout Europe at the expense of Citrine and leaves her mother and son Roger to his care. She goes to Spain and marries Flonzley. Then there is a mafioso, Cantabile who makes him feel gross,
dull and damaged in sensibility. Citrine is much affected by the activities of his wife and others. He wishes for a change in his life, at this moment he meets Humboldt who brings about a great change in his life. Humboldt appears a motivating drive to Citrine. He gives him financial and mental support to face and overcome his problems. Citrine, frequently gets inspired by Humboldt’s characteristics. In his presence he feels, “in my head a white flare went off. There was an illumination of curious clarity” (22). He discusses about the riches of the human heart.

The chance encounter that brings Citrine and Humboldt together cannot be dismissed easily. It brings the past into the present and calls for a review. The friendship of Citrine and Humboldt begins when Citrine goes to New York and appreciates Humboldt’s Harlequin Ballads, a form of pure poetry. The appreciation helps to develop a bond of friendship between them and the two have a clairvoyant insight into the others’ future. Humboldt assures Citrine that he has to fulfill a mission for which he must prepare himself. The two appear to be enraptured by the sense of their own destinies. They consider themselves to be Hegelian and world Historical Individuals and they feel an urge within them to do something to help the human spirit burst from the mental coffin. Their sense of morality and moral consciousness is often made apparent by the expression of their inner longing to perform a task that would be more
noble and enlightening. Hence they want their spirit to "burst from the mental coffin." Humboldt serves thus not only to be Citrine's higher consciousness and motivating force but also the source of his materialistic ambitions. Humboldt is the cause of Citrine's public esteem. He helps Citrine with a powerful and eccentric protagonist for Citrine's play Von Trench that lifts Citrine to a world of money. He also serves as a force by which Citrine is able to seek beauty and truth in New York. The guidance of Humboldt gives a great uplift to Citrine's life and he rises as an intellectual leader, but, suddenly Humboldt's prosperity begins to decline.

There are various reasons for Humboldt's decline. The author suggests through Humboldt's example that a man who has nobler ideals would find it difficult to survive in a materialistic world. Humboldt wanted to drape the world in radiance but materially he is considered a failure. Humboldt is portrayed as the force that guides and awakens Citrine, to realize certain truths regarding life. Humboldt also makes Citrine know the truth related to death. Later Citrine realizes that the burden of selfhood is heavy in the society and this easily consumes the individual because there is the more "it" and the less "we"- people craving for money and other material success, rather than lasting values that unify humans. Industrialization and its products dim the inner miracle within any individual.
Citrine wants to avoid the fate similar to that of Humboldt. He is unable to digest the physical death of Humboldt. He denies the idea of death by finding answers for his question in the metaphysical realm. He regards and follows Steiner’s anthroposophy and has love for Humboldt and then seeks the possibility of immortality. Citrine wishes that Humboldt should have another chance to accomplish his mission, in case the hints of immortality he has felt are true. He is of the opinion that such an extraordinary a thing like the human soul as that of Humboldt’s cannot be wiped out for ever for the birth of Humboldt is not his first existence. He hopes and believes that Humboldt’s presence can be felt even after his death. Citrine believes in the transmigration of the soul which is also the platonic and Vedantic concepts. Hence even after his death Humboldt guides Citrine towards his success. He serves as a force to realize his real self.

The truth that Citrine has learnt through the friendship of Humboldt is that one should make quest for reality and seek truth. He learns that the immortality that he seeks could be produced through the act of love in the form of memory, sympathy and help. He asserts that love is the force needed to battle world’s distractions and that love is a power that can’t leave anyone alone because each one owe to our
existence acts of love performed before them. He concludes that love is the standing debt of the soul.

The Life Beyond

The question related to death appears to be significant to Citrine. In order to solve the doubts related to this he goes to the transcendent level and makes an anti-absurdist statement of meaningful existence and the continued life of the soul. He speaks about the dead:

No, the dead are about us, by our metaphysical vision of them. As we lie nightly in our hemispheres asleep by the billions, our dead approach us, our ideas should be their nourishment. We are their grain fields. But we are barrier and we starve them. Don’t kid yourself though we are watched by the dead watched on this earth, which is our school of freedom. We are free on earth because of cloudness, because of error because of marvelous limitation and as much because of beauty as of blindness and evil. These always go with the blessing of freedom. (qtd in Yadav 100).

He rejects nihilistic fears of the absurd, alienation ethics and the Gehenna like visions of the dead and sets about purging his imaginative powers to recover his Heraclit, a quest to listen to “the essence of things”. He decides to conquer his sloth and to re-establish the conditions of art,
imagination and his private self. For this re-definition of the self he needs to cultivate ‘‘intellectus,’ knowledge obtained through listening to the soul. Finally he concludes with the idea that the spirit always exists and the physical body is an agent of the spirit and its mirror. His idea is that the earth is seen to be a mirror of thoughts, and death as the dark backing of that mirror to see anything. He seeks faith in the power of imagination. Hence he embarks on a prolonged meditation in a hotel room in Madrid to drive away his Chicago connections and distractions. Besides he also shows his love and sympathy to all by way of his generous acts, like the decent burial to Humboldt and his mother, the release of Thaxter from kidnappers, the visit to his ailing brother Julius, the provision of money for Humboldt’s uncle. He does all this because his final understanding is that, that soul is eternal and that his taste is to see the essence of things. This final understanding in Charlie Citrine can be represented as true freedom.

Charlie Citrine’s Struggle

The hero’s attempt for true freedom, truth and beauty is hindered by what he refers to as Chicago conditions. He is figured as a nobleman who yearns to redeem the modern wasteland, from its false values. He is caught in the aggressive environment of Chicago and New York. Charlie faces the alimony battle in a courtroom and is cheated by lawyers, con-
men and others. And his love life with Renata turns out to be a game of money. Due to this Philip Roth has aptly called marriage as a cash institution and love affairs as a cash nexus relationship in his book *My Life as a Man*. All other barriers, repressions and distractions in the modern world are pictured truly in this novel. The protagonist survives amid these conditions ever voicing the hunger of his soul. The novel alternates between the rhythms of metaphysical speculation and "ray low mimetic narrative". There exists the dissection of the secular civilization on the one side and spiritual quest for values on the other, the dualism is relayed in the figures of both Citrine and Humboldt.

Critics have emphasized Citrine’s meditative quest for the essential reality beneath appearances and his preoccupation with death, because of his strong attraction to the anthropological theory of Rudolf Steiner and his numerous references to specifics from Steiners metaphysical system. One can also trace Emerson’s ideas and images in the novel. Many critics have identified dualities in the novel. One can find the symbolic light imagery, the importance of love and friendship, the high value placed on sense perception, the desire to escaped distraction in favor of simplicity. It also contains the celebration of non-conformity, the recognition of American strength and vitality as nourishment for the poetic imagination, the centrality of character in Citrine’s assessment of associates and most
significant of all for the resolution of his own internal struggles, the need of action to evolve from thought.

Robert F. Kiernan and Gloria I Cronin have discussed the concept of strengthening selfhood in *Humboldt's Gift*. Ellen Pifer in *Saul Bellow Against the Grain* (1990) has emphasized an idealistic spiritual theme in the novel. Citrine in the novel, uses first person singular pronouns to expose his increasing self-awareness. Citrine admits that Ulick and Cantabile – a comic personification of his darker, lustier self, have great power over him, because they know so well what they want. Their desire might appear to be of a very low type but they are pursued in full wakefulness. In relation to this Citrine exclaims that Thoreau saw a woodchick at Walden and it was more fully awake than the eyes of any farmer. But Ulick was awake to money, therefore Citrine says of himself, that he has a craving to do right and the craving to do right was swelling in his heart. So he became aware of that liberal sleep of his American boyhood which lasted half a century. He also gradually awakens to the knowledge of the higher truth. He becomes aware of the light existing within him:

from his deeper self in communion with a spiritual light, that he apprehends within and around him. Preparing to testify in court over his impending divorce from Denise, and Waiting for the erotic
Renata, Charlie speaks of himself, as a person who had lately received or experienced light...a kind of light—in—the—being...and this light...was now a real element in me, he recalls, like the breath of life itself...in the finest decades of life I knew this light and even knew how to breathe it in. (177-178)

Citrine expresses an eagerness, “to develop a new cosmological feeling for the sun” with the consequent realization that “it was in part our creator” and he further feels that this solar creator would leave a sun-band in all individuals. Through this intuition that Citrine has, he eventually attempts and overcomes his original ego-centric thoughts and dichotomies. The transformation that he undergoes is due to the inner light of his soul. This inner reality becomes apparent through little acts of kindness and love. Renata rejects him. She marries Flozaley. But the act motivates Citrine’s realization. He does not hate her, instead he becomes the patron of her son. It is possible because of Humboldt’s gift, willed jointly to Kalhleen and Citrine himself. This legacy that Citrine inherits, induces cooperation and love and it also helps Citrine to enter moral manhood. This becomes apparent through Citrine’s opening conversation on Coney Island with Humboldt’s uncle Waldemar, a “faintness comes over” and Citrine suddenly realizes that “there is far more to any experience, connection or relationship than ordinary consciousness, the
daily life of the ego, can grasp, yes... the soul belongs to a greater, an all embracing life outside. It’s got to” (332). The experiences that Citrine has shapes his self and a transformation occurs in his personality at the final end of the novel due to which he is initially drawn to philosophical idealism. He observes, “I had decided to listen to the voice of my own mind speaking from within, from my own depths, and this voice said that there was my body, in nature, and that there was also me” (186). He learns that he is related to nature only through his body.

Citrine becomes cognizant of the limitations caused by his disassociation of body and soul, nature and spirit. He is open to experience and he learns to penetrate it. Citrine apprehends that one must listen secretly to the sound of the truth that god puts into every human being. He also echoes the idea of Tolstoy that one should, “begin simply to live without giving much importance to the false and unnecessary comedy of history” (477). In conclusion it can be stated that finally Citrine realizes the real or the true concept of his life. In relation to this idea Sanford E. Marovitz says that Charlie Citrine can be seen as:

a man of character, nourished by the soul within and by nature without, the responsible self-reliant mensh toward which his initial quest, his ‘dying to do something good’ was directed. He continues to express
ideas and observes that Just because one's soul is being torn to pieces it
doesn't mean that one should stop analyzing the phenomenon.

He observes:

few people seemed to be consummating anything good, these days.
Look at me, I couldn't be serious, becoming involved in this sort of
grotesque comic Mercedes-and-under world thing. As I stood on
my head, I know (I would know!) that there was a sort of
theoretical impulse...the powerful theories of the modern world
being that for self-realization...Be healed by the humiliating truth
the unconscious contains. (48)

Various activities in his life enhance the awareness of his self. For
example Citrine who has arthritis is advised by the doctor to stand on his
neck upside down. This gives him relief from pain. The exercise revealed,
"bright things and diaphanous rings. Like seeing eternity. Which believe
me, I was ready for on this day" (50). In the conversation with Humboldt,
he realizes the truth about humanity. It appeared to him divine and
incomprehensible.

Citrine whose lung was affected, spent his eighth year in the public
ward of a TB Sanatorium. The stay and treatment revealed to him
higher and nobler realities, he states:

Owing to the TB I connected breathing with joy, and...I connected joy with light and I related light on the walls to light inside me. I appear to have become a Hallelujah and Glory type, further more (concluding) America is a didactic country whose people always offer their personal experiences as a helpful lesson to the rest, hoping to hearten them and to do them good – an intensive sort of personal public-relations project. There are times when I see this as idealism. (65)

Citrine’s hunt for the self, the higher truth continues, he exclaims:

But I could tell him what was on my mind? Could I say that that morning I had been reading Hegel’s “Phenomenology”, the pages on freedom and death? Could I say that I had been thinking about the history of human consciousness...could I say that for years now I had been preoccupied with this theme and that I had discussed it with the poet Von Humboldt Fleisher? (69)

The presence of Humboldt makes him realize the supreme power of the soul. So he feels sentimental about urban ugliness, junk and wretchedness. To him freedom is the true freedom, a detachment from
material ties and to know the pure self within. Citrine continues his musings. They reveal his idealistic ideas:

I was badly disappointed by the shallow interests – dreams betrayed. Even my dreams were sleep. And what about money? Money is necessary for the protection of the sleeping, spending drives you into wakefulness. As you purge the inner film from the eye and rise into higher consciousness, less money should be required. (110)

He feels satisfied when he ignores material prospects. He concentrates on the exercise of meditation and suspends all practical activities. This he does to keep himself from strain. He practices some exercise recommended by Rudolf Steiner in Knowledge of The Higher Worlds and its Attainment. The exercise helps him to attain higher consciousness. The consciousness makes him realize the truth that he has not achieved any worthy ideal in his life. His soul has been stained and banged. He has to be patient in order to overcome these hurdles and when they are extricated he would realize his authentic self. He often recollected the words of Humboldt to intensify his inner search. He remembers what Humboldt often used to say, “imagination must not pine away – that was Humboldt’s message. It must assert again that manifests the inner powers of nature. To the savior – faculty of the imagination
sleep was sleep, and waking was true waking" (112). He often wonders, how to prevent the leprosy of souls in this age and to make this idea true, he practices mental discipline, he observes:

In the mental discipline I had recently begun, and of which I already felt the good effects, stability equipoise and tranquility were the prerequisites. I said to myself, “Tranquility, tranquility”, As on the request ball court I said “Dance, dance, dance”, And it always had some result. The will is a link which connects the soul to the world as it is, Through the will the soul frees itself from distraction and mere dreams. (189)

In conclusion it can be stated that Humboldt serves as the motivating force of Citrine that drives him to a wholesome wakefulness or consciousness of the self. Citrine exists with this awareness and in the course of the novel has various experiences that enhance the awareness and reveal the presence of the self in him. Eventually he attempts to keep away from the distracting world. He finds a place in Madrid Hotel to avoid his Chicago connections and concentrates on meditation. Thus the life of Citrine reveals his strong individual self. The strength of his individual self strengthens his true self and his noble nature.
The Concept of Awareness

Bellow’s main concern in most of his novels is to depict the true, authentic self, the real human within. He is also seen as an explorer of human consciousness. He probes human experience related to various cultures. His heroes serve as representatives of his experiences, his ideas, and themes. His novels display the fact that any experience can enable one to become aware of the underlying consciousness of the self. The search of the self or the presence of the soul and its awareness may be hindered by innumerable hurdles. These hurdles can be surpassed by extreme moral consciousness.

A civilized man may have more cosmic concern. This interest can evolve from his moral consciousness and the awareness of the real self that adds glory to one’s personality. The external forces like society, community, wealth, power and experiences in life can change one’s attitude to life. Success counted by wealth would not give happiness to an individual who lives on the principles of morality, his intellect which craves for the knowing of a higher truth, may neglect the ordinary ties with life and find a place elsewhere and for Corde, the protagonist of The Dean’s December it is the Palmer observatory. In this novel his self
is portrayed as a strong force that works for the welfare of humanity showing great cosmic concern.

The novel *The Dean's December* has been seen to be one brimming with ideas. The interest of the work appears to be moral concern, measuring the state of the new world order, with the models of beings that serve to determine one's individual place, the self, with all the past and present ideas. The novel is found to contain in it the investigation of man's existence on this earth and as an embodiment of philosophical reflection in it which is not unwarranted. It appears to illuminate man as a concrete being. The protagonist of the novel professor Corde seems to be puzzled over the ethical outrage he sees as dead in the contemporary civilization. The concern of Corde, the protagonist, is that he is unable to find appropriate relationship based on ethical notions capable of sustaining, harmonious and constructive living in the society. The word 'December' can be taken to be expressing the tone of coldness and extinction of what is good and moral. The novel is set in two cities-Bucharest and Chicago, the former noted for its institutionalized life and, the latter for destructive fury and death.

**Albert Corde's Life**

Corde is depicted as a man who exists with a strong individual self. He is aware of his inner self and he is also transcendental in his outlook.
So he attempts to cleanse the world of its evils by exposing the evils to the outside world. Many hurdles prevent his success. Hence he alters his attitude and pursues the path which pleases him. He understands the complexity in the world around him, yet he attempts to discover man’s fundamental human nature and is partially successful. The people and the experience around him make him understand man’s fundamental nature.

He had been a journalist, earlier, and was reporting political matters. Later he assumes the position of a professor of journalism and become the Dean in the University of Chicago and lives in the world of ideas, poetry and criticism. His wife is Minna Corde, a Rumanian educated in Astro-physics in a communist country, works in America to escape the commitments of community politics. Valeria, Minna’s mother, who has worked as the minister of health, once purged, now remains partly rehabilitated.

Corde avails of an opportunity to write of the conditions prevailing in Chicago in the Harper’s magazine. In this article he exposes, the rise of skyscrapers and the bourgeois who triple-lock their doors to protect their Byzantine wealth and life. Through the exposure in the Harper’s he hopes to redeem the suffering lot, so that they can find a better life. He also wishes to establish classical values, but he is unable to establish his ideas, so he decides to find his existence elsewhere. He becomes more
transcendent in his outlook. Hence goes to the Palmer Observatory where his wife Minna is working. As he goes up the observatory he feels that the Heaven is opening up and he hopes to hear the voices of those who are eager to drape the world with their ethical ideas.

**The Protagonist’s cosmic concern**

In describing the city of Chicago Corde exposes the moral degradation that prevails in the land and it is done through the use of symbolic words like “light...inadequate...short energy”, “December brown” and “impure melancholy”. Corde appears to be an individual who longs for a great change in the life and mentality of the individuals so that man can be redeemed from immoral ideas. He is eager “to find the lines about the red hall to which a man’s sightless soul might stray” (10). He observes, “the dust went off in the sunlight...for God’s sake, open the universe a little more”. He wishes that in spite of having great power and publicity one should be good, while referring to a famous neurosurgeon he queries, “After my father died he became a big shot, is he good? They say he’s a genius we’ll have to think about it” (22). These reflections of Corde expose his cosmic concern.

Corde makes an analysis of the contemporary conditions of his society reveal the idea that there is no inborn capacity in man to know what is good. He also observes that there is no importance for one’s
attitudes, only disinterested out-look prevails and there is no concern for the community. The ancient classical civilization such as the Greek, the Roman, the English, whatever is old is disappearing; the new order can have no vision of them. The present ethics in the west has its source on the following guiding tents: a romantic sense of the uncivilized zeal in the under classes, the Darwinian law of the jungle; power based on wealth and politics, scientific analysis, these ideologies are responsible for ethical chaos and degradation of the self and the society.

In the course of the analyses of the world in which he lives, he finds a clear difference between power and powerlessness. Bucharest enables him to discover the difference in the tensions created which may be discovered in the tensions created by the impending death of Valeria, his mother-in-law. He stays in the hospital caring her and this helps him to find a sharp contrast between Valeria and the KGB Colonel, the former representing old privilege and the latter new power. The elderly people show their concern and sympathy for the dying woman while the young lack such attitudes. The elderly people, because they have to exist in the rigid new regime, have formed an informal mutual aid network. These people, a few of them, work as spies for the government while some others work secretly or send messages to help friends of the old order.
The ancient folk thus adhere to the concepts of loyalty and justice and know what is good and what is right.

Corde has read the classics and the works of great writers like Plato, Aristotle, Dante, Shakespeare, Milton, Nietzsche, Rilke and others, and his moral strength enables him to know how they advocate virtues like liberty, equality and justice. Corde laments that the western tradition uses virtues only as drapery to hide the rejection of this tradition by people at all levels in the society. The modern world fails to recognize and give importance to the feelings and virtues of old people like Valeria. The people of ancient virtues represent the lesson of the Greek tragedies and the idea that wisdom can be gained through suffering.

The moral strength in Corde enables him to think that affliction exists, massively in the American society and it is the outcome of man's greed and sense of injustice. He opines that the under classes should be enlightened in order to know the difference between what is violence and what is good and humane, these instructions should touch the heart of these people so that they can be taught the truth concerning the essence of life. Another incident and narration that highlight Corde’s strong self and moral consciousness is his reaction to the power elite of the city who survive at the expense of the under classes. Corde asserts his self by exposing the power game of the elite in articles published in the Harper's.
As a result he is declared out of bounds of the university that wants to get rid of him on grounds of his lack of conformity through the PhD process, while the inside story is his opposition to the city plan, approved and controlled by the power group with the aid of wealth, media and political power. Their sense of security and preservation of wealth are supreme in their view. Hence they consign the under classes to suffering and death. His reaction to lead poisoning on the geographic beach is noteworthy. Corde finds the scientific method tempting but unconvincing. He observes that it deadens the soul of the man in respect of what is good and evil. He is also baffled at the loss of ancient virtues from the contemporary life. He learns that he cannot openly utter his noble ideas before the elite, they are so materialistic to accept his higher virtues. Hence he decides to go to Mount Palomer. He rises in the elevator, to the empty skies, coldly inviting him and reminding him of the dome, where he can be in tune with the mysterious voices from those who ever endeavored to sustain mankind with an ethical message.

**Saul Bellow and the Dean’s December**

In an interview Bellow has expressed and clarified his central thematic concerns in the novel. He had said that he wanted to write a book about Chicago. Therefore he visited the town and made observations regarding its activities. The visit did not give him
inspiration; instead he found life in the town to be dreadful. He saw in the
life, the denial of real reality. People were living in illusion and
submitting themselves to taboos. These ideas of reality, Bellow has
captured into his novel, for example the Dean who thinks that people are
becoming wrath and spooks. Bellow has adopted a narrative technique
that shows the world as filtered through the consciousness of Corde. The
strategy adapted by Bellow is to use the inner meditative perceptions of
Corde’s mind as the shaping principles of the novel. Stanley
Trachtenberg in writing about The Inner Reality of Saul Bellow’s, The
Dean’s December, has stated that the environment in the houses of
Bellow has functioned less in influencing the events and characters, for it
plays a greater role in the projection of protagonist’s inner conflict. It is
also used as a device, a symbol and is an agent of in-human darkmen. The
remarks made by Trachtenberg apply to Corde precisely. The graphic
depiction of the social life of Chicago is one of the attractions in the
novel. But what engages Bellow’s imagination is Corde’s ongoing
struggle to evaluate internally his self.

As a cosmic observer, Corde discovers, “the slum” of the psyche,
a corrosive force which, for Bellow, devitalizes contemporary civilization
in general. Bellow, himself, clarifies this point in his remarks on the
novel. He observes that there exists a relation between the outer world
and the inner world, between the brutalized city and the psyche of its citizens. Likewise Corde, the dean in the novel is passionately affected by the happenings in Chicago and he writes about it as an artist. Corde’s compassionate assault against such a corrosive force that he finds among the Chicago people motivates from him the following response, it is that, when he collected material for the review of life he found at once wounds, lesions, cancers, destructive fury and death. So immediately he wanted to represent the same. Corde’s reflection of the city makes him to think that these ‘‘cancers’’ and ‘‘lesions’’ are only surface manifestations of a deeper condition: It was not so much of the inner city slum. But it is that which threatened everyone with, as the slum of the innermost being. The city is just a material representation.

Corde is an example of the typical Bellovian hero who approaches the business of the soul and like other heroes, Arthur Sammler, Citrine, Herschel Shwnut. Corde seems to be overly sensitive, high minded, shrewd, contradictory and a man subject to fits of vividness. He is portrayed as the protagonist who wrestles with psychological conflicts like other heroes of Bellow. Corde inherits many of the qualities or traits that have been defined in the Inner Reality of Saul Bellow’s Dean’s December. And it is that the central figures in Bellow’s novels represent the heroic self and ordinary self. The Heroes are driven in
pursuit of self perfection and at the same time paralyzed by immersion in a hostile environment of death. Corde finds himself caught in such a conflict.

In order to know and experience the human soulscape, Corde feels a moral imperative to rediscover, ontologically the nature of human communication and objective reality. While introducing Corde’s inner reflections Bellow establishes the above point emphatically. Corde opines in his inner reflections, “Therefore the first act of morality was to disinter the reality, retrieve reality, dig it out from the trash, represent it a new as art would represent it” (123). Therefore, Corde’s direct force in life centers on the impulse to recover the world from its false values, to release it from the debris of false description and non-experience.

Corde takes a qualitative measurement of the world around:

Thus he had taken it upon himself to pass Chicago through his own soul. A mass of data, terrible, murderous. It was no easy matter to put such things through. But there was no other way for reality to happen. Reality didn’t exist “out there”, It began to be real only when the soul found its underlying truth. (126)
Albert Corde’s Humanism

Corde’s relationship with Valeria, his mother-in-law, is thematically central to the novel. The relationship between them reveals Corde’s humanism, a quality which arises when one exists with the true self. The key scene depicted in the novel is also an example of Corde’s interest to show kindness and love to others. In the opening chapter, Corde escorts Valeria for two days while Minna reads a paper at a scientific conference. The moment appears an awkward time for Corde, presumably because his mother-in-law, Valeria, scrutinized his character and his worthiness during this time. Corde realized that the vacation was physically too demanding for the near-eighty-year-old Valeria, “He was upset for her, she couldn’t keep her balance; she was tipping, listing, seemed unable to coordinate the movements of her feet” (15). Valeria is found to be extremely frail in her appearance. She never admits this truth because she is seen to be a women of strong convictions. Corde is not only aware of Valeria’s frailty but he also has a genuine concern for the old woman. While Valeria is on her death bed, Corde shows more concern and thinks of her with extraordinary respect. It is not because of familial duty but it is out of “‘personal humanity’”, for he has discovered in Valeria “‘the feeling of human agreement’” for which he constantly yearns. Finally at Valeria’s funeral, Bellow clearly presents the
humanizing quality in Corde through his response to her death. The death of Valeria awakens in him the sense of mortality:

She had died, and she was dead, and last arrangements were being made. But he couldn’t say that she was dead to him. It wouldn’t have been an accurate statement. One might call this a comforting illusion, a common form of weakness, but in fact there was nothing at all, he could take no comfort in it. Nor was it anything resembling an illusion. It was more like an internal fact of which he became conscious. (176)

He realizes the temporary nature of human life, “At the crematorium he had gone through a death rehearsal. You couldn’t rehearse death gratis. It had to cost something” (216). He takes up the responsibility of making, all arrangements for the peaceful funeral of Valeria, this he does to please his wife Minna. This strengthens the relationship between Corde and Minna.

**Albert Corde and Minna Corde**

In the early part of the novel the marriage of Corde and Minna, like so many other marriages in Bellow’s earlier novels, seems earmarked for failure. Minna confesses that her husband remains somewhat of a mystery to her “you turned out to be a much more emotional and strange person
than I ever expected” (259). Minna accepts and loves Corde but with some voiced reservations. The cause may be because of the difference in their outlook. Minna is more scientific whereas Corde is more humanistic.

The novel concludes with a different outlook towards marriage. Inspite of the differences there appears a thread of unity between Minna and Corde. The strong self of Corde creates this bond of unity. The novel, The Dean’s December ends not with the dissolution of marriages, but with the unification of man and woman.

The separateness that exists between Corde and Minna gives way at the end of chapter nineteen to togetherness which both finally share. Bellow while discussing the novel has pointed out this union between Corde and Minna. He has stated that the bond of friendship, the authentic love connecting the Corde’s is real and it is an achievement. Bellow further adds that the estrangement of human beings is a fact of life, no longer a hypothetic price that one has to pay for but this is the withering of the heart. Hence an individual ought to feel the recovery of feeling with his intelligence. One is to educate one’s feeling. The idea appears very clear in the life of Corde. He recognizes the necessity of ennobling and reckoning. He understands finally that each one carries within themselves, an iceberg which is to be melted. Intelligence may be the
source of coldness, but it is to be used in the melting project of the iceberg that exists between individuals. One should not become crippled but ought to know the study of love which is combined with discipline. Corde who resolves these differences he has with Minna, senses the regeneration of spirit, his self, because he can once again focus on the particulars of the world around him. He feels that the world has begun to edge back to reveal itself, and he also thanks God for it. He exists with equilibrium and a very extensive kind of composure, not ordinary, this change in him he observes to be, “this rankling – sometimes an electric prickling in a circle around his heart...couldn’t be separated from his sense of improvement of coming into his own” (283). The pricking sense prevails and asserts the self of Corde and it is also his moral sense.

Albert Corde’s Convictions

One can find at the end of the novel a great difference in Corde. The world around him remains the same. He concludes that he cannot bring about a great change, suddenly, so he comes to accept the world as it appears. He is ready to articulate his convictions, probably in the Beech articles, but the suggestion is that he will be better equipped to argue; he shall launch a verbal, “‘bristling gunboat attack’”, but with better, more thoughtful rhetorical strategy. At the end of the novel one can witness the maturation of Corde. He hears about the information that Ricky Lester’s
murderers are convicted – there by securing a legal victory for Lydia Lester and a moral victory for himself. Now he appears more capable of objectively grounding his perceptions in a cause he championed. He finds, the truth that nobody will change. The condition of the jails will remain the same. He further adds, “Lucas Ebry and Reggie Hines are exactly the same. There are millions where they come from – not attached to life, and Nobody can suggest how to attach them” (279-80). Bellow imparts the message that Corde cannot entirely change the social injustices significantly. Bellow’s concern here is to highlight the strong self and the moral quality of Corde.

Bellow presents the protagonist as a hero who can once again attend to his surroundings and as one who accepts what seems a naturalistic universe. His public self is thwarted by a world inimical to his values. So the novelist portrays Corde, finally, as one who can gain solace, energy from his private self. Moreover he is satisfied that Minna can complete her research in California. The regeneration of Corde is underscored by the author. Corde returns home and has a feeling of comfort. He finds the weather to be bright, keen blue and the afternoon of January thaw, indicating a new beginning for his self and moral insight. He also finds mildness in touching and doing things at home. Then there is, “the light of warmer seasons, not of deep winter. It came up from his
own harmonies as well as down from above. The lake was steady nothing but windless water before him” (289). Corde feels that the atmosphere of his home is filled with warmth and the attitude reflects his inner harmony. It is the harmony of his moral sense and noble nature.

Corde looks at the outside world through the rod of his sixteenth story porch and he feels as one who would be carried over the water and into the distant colors. Then there appears to him the blues of Italian landscape which he passed through and these are to him:

very close to the borders of sense, as if he could do perfectly well without the help of his eyes, you didn’t need human organs to see, but experiencing as freedom and also as joy what the mental person, seated there in his coat and gloves, otherwise recorded as colors, spaces, weights. This was different. It was like being poured out to the horizon, like a great expansion. What if death should be like this, the soul finding an exit...the rest beyond it, drew you constantly as the completion of your reality. (290)

Transformation

A life organized for the discovery of the potentialities already existing within oneself and the ordering of one’s behavior so as to nurture and nourish them, is a life well spent. So the success of one depends upon the amount of transformation that one can successfully bring about in
one’s personality and character. Corde’s new-tempered acceptance of his predicament and his change in attitude, even the tonal quality of the language, mirrors not only his newly discovered calmness, but his sharper, more mature perceptions of his surroundings. In relation to the idea Malcolm Bradbury has observed a transcendental quality in the conclusion of the novel as in Bellow’s other novels. These transcendental qualities as Bradbury insists are an essential direction of Bellow’s works and they are also part of his philosophy that gives strength and power to his novels. These qualities gain power because they are motivated by the protagonist’s authentic self and moral consciousness. The second issue of understanding the change in Corde is made clear in the last chapter of the novel, a chapter presenting for the first time husband and wife attending to the other with felt love and a sense of honest commitment.

Corde attempts in the final chapter, successfully what Bellow suggests the Will to the recovering of his feeling, not only for humanity but also for Minna, for their marriage. The freezing temperature at the observatory generates for Corde, internal warmth.

The fact about Corde is revealed apparently when he appears to regain a much-needed perspective on his public and private self. Bellow creates the bond of unity by linking these characters Valeria, Minna and Corde with love. Corde and Minna who rediscover the sources of their
love gain a kind of transcendental spiritual bond. The change is made
evident when Minna shares her world with Corde during their ascent to
the top of the observatory. The nearness of Heaven is felt by Corde and
he feels that Heaven would absorb him. The picture that is made obvious
is the regenerative ambience enveloping the conservatory dome.

Corde finds the place as a living heaven, replete with stars. He is
sure that here his brain will be at peace to resolve his puzzling problems,
where he can restore his lost vision of humanity. His renewal is made
obvious by his resignation. In order to return to nature, he resigns his
place in the university and he is unable to step out of his view. He who is
in the observatory takes a look through the glass of the telescope, he sees
through the glass, and understands that life is endowed with metaphysical
brightness. Bellow bestows Corde with the highest principles of morality.
The real greatness of the novel depends upon its moral power and insight
shown for contemporary society. Bellow himself has observed in the
novel, “In the American moral crisis, the first requirement was to
experience what was happening and to see what must be seen, therefore,
the first act of morality was to disinter the reality, retrieve reality, dig it
out from the trash, represent it as new as art would represent it”. (124).
Thus the central theme of the novel is the urge to represent reality. The
novel also represents the desire to expose the need of moral principles in
the modern world.