CHAPTER II
AWARENESS

Man must rise; must not grieve over his dead actions. He must go onward and forward. Opportunities are never lacking. The wisest thing for us is to make the best possible use of our present.

*Ralph Waldo Emerson*

**The Self and the Society**

Life has its expression in various forms. Man is the supreme creation of life. He is the abode of innumerable thoughts and ideas. Therefore man has probed and identified material prospects and he has remained unsatisfied. He can gain satisfaction only when he identifies his true self. So he is seen to exist with an urge to know and identify his real self. Man's urge for re-definition of the self and for life has been incorporated into many texts. The awareness of the authentic self is essential to build-up essential morals and values that can establish communal harmony. The knowledge of the authentic self and that of essential values can be cherished by the discriminative intellect prevalent in individuals and by a critical study and analysis of oneself.
The analysis of the self can be indirectly co-related to the present and future welfare of a human being. This analysis is also linked to one's consciousness. The individual consciousness, analysis and will power enable him to shape his self. It includes the process of awareness of one's self. This awareness is of great importance because it promotes better understanding, nobility, selfless service and creates social responsibility.

Bellow’s novels can be said to be deeply appropriate to the season in which they appeared. The period during which these works were written was that of war and post war. The time was one of agonized existentialism and a sense of human absurdity. So the writers sought recovery from this state of existence. The novels taken for study in this chapter illustrate the above idea.

The protagonists of the novels Dangling Man and The Victim find human absurdity and seek recovery from this absurdity. They analyze and try to know their commitment in their life. This process involves a transition of the individual self. Their individual self is developed and shaped through analyses and consciousness. Their will power enables them to identify the motive. Later they become aware of the strength of their individual self.
Joseph and Asa Leventhal are portrayed as victims. The self of these men are enslaved by the social and political forces of their life. They find human absurdity in neighbors, friends and relatives and long for its recovery. But they are caught in a collapsed culture and express spiritual agony and struggle with the society and its members. They take up the path of selfless dedicated service in order to establish their individual self. They are seen to have discriminative knowledge and disciplined contemplation which are used as techniques for their self-development. Joseph prefers, dedicated service, induction into the army and Leventhal develops and understands his social responsibility. The heroes pursue the meaning of their life and try to discriminate good from evil. They constantly contemplate on questions about the self and moral consciousness. These twin traits promote notable change in the personality of these individuals.

The novelist has endeavored to expose in Dangling Man Joseph’s self in transition. He suggests significantly the simultaneous existence of Joseph’s authentic self and the individual self. Joseph’s changes in thought, attitude and experiences are also depicted by Bellow. His concern in this novel is to know the need for the real self. The Novelist depicts the individual self’s longing for recognition. He insists on the truth that individuals existing with the individual self, in relation to the
authentic self and moral consciousness, would understand their role in the society and would accommodate themselves to life and its experiences.

**Dangling Man: Summation in brief**

The protagonist, Joseph, in *Dangling Man* is alienated from himself and his environment. He has resigned his job to answer the army's call for induction. He has to wait for a long time. During this period of leisure, "the Dangling Man," Joseph makes a philosophical quest which takes the form of several enquiries into the nature of human life. In his room, he lives alone for ten hours. He attempts to follow the advice of Diderot-Moi. It is that one should shut oneself up in a garret and eat a dry crust, drink plain water and try to identify himself. After the advice of Moi the search of Joseph narrows from common humanity to the knowledge of his ownself. Joseph emerges as a self-indulgent man, he eats too much, quits writing, sleeps late, gains weight and sinks as he himself recognizes into Hobbes's "nasty, brutish and short" realities of purposeless existence. Because of this change, he deteriorates into a state of anti-hero, he separates himself from the cycle of nature and the cycle of human life. He lives in a vacuum. Joseph has always been aloof from the seasonal changes. His selfishness spoils the enjoyment of Christmas and New Year's Eve. The sixth wedding anniversary of Joseph is marked with awry and gloomy atmosphere. He places inordinate value on his own
freedom and individuality. The attitude of Joseph towards his wife is total indifference. But he depends on her financial support. For the time being he is also separated from his wife and turns to another lady Kitty for love. But very soon he is disillusioned. He learns the truth that Kitty is in love another man and cannot pay attention to him. At the end of his spiritual journey which has been made for the knowledge of the self and also for “pure freedom,” Joseph comes to realize that he cannot be free except in giving himself away:

We struggle perpetually to free ourselves. Or, to put it somewhat differently, while we seem so intently and even desperately to be holding on to ourselves, we would far rather give ourselves away. We do not know how. So, at times, we throw ourselves away. When what we really want is to stop living so exclusively and vainly for our own sake, impure and unknowing, turning inward and self-fastened. (qtd in Pradhan 26)

Therefore Joseph prefers a life in the army instead of the life in solitary confinement. He realizes that Goodness cannot be achieved in a vacuum, so he feels as one who is separate, alienated, distrustful, longing to find a purpose. The world appears to him closed, a hopeless jail and he feels that his perspectives would end within the walls. Hence Joseph comes to know that he cannot lead a life of total confinement.
Finally Joseph achieves another important realization. It is the fact that his quest is the common human quest like all others. Many engage in a search to know the ultimate purpose of their life. They also seek grace. He recognizes that his ultimate destiny is also the common human destiny, his spirit tells him, “Everybody else is dangling too” (154). Joseph joins the human race once again and he is no longer cut off from the spring of life. He is reborn in the spring of the year and he celebrates the first day of spring by walking in the park. The celebration of life according to him is death. This truth is the ultimate realization of Joseph. He urgently requests his draft board to call him into selective service. Through his wide meditation Joseph is led to think that instead of making philosophical preparation to live, he must prepare himself to die. The great fact of life, Joseph realizes, is death. The unconscious thought in his mind is death. The ideal example of death to him is his landlady’s death. After passing a life of service to others, she died surrounded by her family and friends. Due to her service her life gains some meaning. So her death is seen with a sense of grandeur. Thus there is a development of human quality in the life of Joseph.
Joseph, The Self and Moral Consciousness

*Dangling Man* records the day-to-day incidents in the life of the narrator protagonist, Joseph, in the form of a journal. The novel envisions through the protagonist a moral vision. Everything in the novel happens within the single consciousness of Joseph. He prevails with this consciousness and makes many queries: “Do you have an inner life? It is nobody’s business but your own” (10). The queries insist the idea that every individual exists with an inner consciousness and the duty of an individual is to strive hard for its awareness, in order to experience the true knowledge of the self. In his search for the self, Joseph confronts the problems of loneliness and alienation.

Loneliness, alienation and lack of job hinder Joseph’s activities. So he thinks that he leads a meaningless life. But his loneliness enables him to identify his authentic self. In the course of identification his moral consciousness evolves, so he suffers from a feeling of strangeness, and contemplates that the real world is not the world in which one lives but elsewhere:

But for all that, Joseph suffers from a feeling of strangeness, of not belonging to the world, of lying under a cloud and looking up at it. Now, he says, all human beings share this to some extent. The child feels that his parents are pretenders; his real father is
elsewhere and will some day come to claim him. And for others the
real world is here at all and what is at hand is spurious and copied.

(21)

These words of Joseph reveal the philosopher in him. His
observations are that each individual is the child of the omnipresent father
and that this world is transitory. The individual who tries to know the
importance of this higher reality of the omnipresent father may find this
world an illusion. The tediousness of the illusionary world can be
overcome while seeking the higher reality.

Joseph also proposes introspection to keep track of his “inward
transactions”, and to face boldly the vital questions of the self. While
reading the novel, to become conscious of Bellow’s – technique is to
become conscious of his theme and through the paradoxes governing the
protagonist’s personality the novelist's intention becomes manifest. The
paradoxes are revealed through the subtle use of different technical
deVICES. A valid approach to the theme of the novel can be made through
an analysis of Joseph’s view of himself. His consciousness is central to
the novel and all other ideas become peripheral. To himself, Joseph is the
I, the participant in experience and the source of contemplation, the he,
an object to be discussed and commented upon.
As a spectator and thinker, Joseph would not allow himself to stand finitude, in fact, he would jump time and space, if possible, and attain, *Being*, (existing with the authentic self and moral consciousness). His ordinary existence disgust him, but he considers it a prerogative to answer the vital existential question, “Who is a good man? what ought he to do? (39). Joseph poses many questions to himself during his waiting, and this is followed by his resignation from his job in the American Travel Bureau in order to respond to the Army’s call for induction. Joseph often attempts to seek answers to his questions by submitting himself to a painful trail of loneliness and self – courting, and he discovers in the process, that all possible avenues of escape into life – status, ideology, aestheticism, religion, family and friends - have been barred to him, and he has less touch with the outside world, he rarely leaves his room:

If you have difficulties, grapple with them silently, goes one of their commandments, to hell with that, I intend to talk about mine, and if I had as many mouths as Siva has arms and kept them going all the time, I still could not do myself justice...I do not feel guilty of self-indulgence in the least. The hardboiled are compensated for their silence; they fly planes or fight bulls or catch tarpon, whereas I rarely leave my room. (7)
Joseph remains alone in his room. So he makes many queries. He is of the opinion that being unemployed; he has lost his sense of place and security in the society. He forms a disillusion with Marxism and this is derived from his recognition that a vital answer cannot be sought in radical political ideologies and the superior world of imagination, of art and books that represented to him an extended life, a life far more precious than the one he was forced to live. The life appears inadequate for his purposes, though it continues to serve well for his artist friend, John pearl who has discovered in it a connection with the best part of mankind. Joseph has a feeling that his own talent is for being a citizen, and it is according to him a good man. The need to be good and the need to live a purposeful and cohesive life makes Joseph an introvert. Therefore he turns away from his family, friends and his wife Iva. He exclaims “We no longer confide in each other,” he continues, “in fact there and many things I could not mention to her. We have friends, but we no longer see them...the main bolt that held us together has given way, and so far I have had no incentive to replace it” (12). The distrust that Joseph has for others finds an eloquent expression in Joseph's behavior with his father-in-law when the latter falls ill. When the father-in-law Old Almstadt falls ill his wife looks after him with care and concern. So Old Almstadt develops an over fondness for his wife.
The father-in-law’s complacent fondness for his wife puzzles Joseph, it does so to him particularly because he knows that it does not result from hypocrisy or passive resignation, "There was still another possibility to consider, and that was that he was not resigned but...heard and delighted in her, wanted her slovenly, garrulous, foolish and coy, and take pleasure in enduring her" (qtd in Kulshrestha 70). The statement explains the fact that Old Almstadat has an acceptance of life’s ordinariness, but Joseph neither shares the same view of his father-in-law nor does he accept the exact nature of his father-in-law’s sentiment for his wife. He is unable to recognize the necessity of such an outlook for himself. Joseph is portrayed differently in Bellow’s moral framework, and he is of the opinion that by withdrawing from the suffocating actuality of life, it is possible to arrive at a more refined conception of the self.

Joseph wanted to know the **Colony of the spirit** or a group whose covenants forbade spite, bloodiness and cruelty. The world is seen to be crude and dangerous by Joseph. He feels that if no measures were taken existence could become as in Hobbes phrase, which had long lodged in Joseph’s mind “nasty, brutish and short”. The source of such a program perhaps resides in Joseph’s fascination for the philosophers of the Enlightenment on whom he intended to write several essays. The
Enlightenment motto “Dare to know” meaning “Trust your knowledge” emphasized that valid ethical norms can be established by man’s total reliance on his reason. Joseph realizes that there are many “treasons” that corrupt his cherished ideals. Those that instill corruption into Joseph is observed to be the polluted air, water, that passed in and out of man. They are seen as accomplices of man and these ideas are never found to be incomprehensible by Joseph. He has a doubt that a search for the ideal might never be reached.

The protagonist learns through his life that the ordinary and the dismal, the stubborn, gross and all that constitutes reality cannot be avoided. Joseph’s day-to-day encounters with friends, relatives and total strangers force on him the recognition that he too is earthy and common, vulnerable to anger, suspicion and humiliation, often an object of pity. Joseph, as an individual, identifies the sordid aspects of life. He learns the truth that he cannot evade death.

The pre-vision of mortality comes to him when a man collapses in front of him on the road. So the idea of death haunts him, even during the day. Therefore he dreams of death, dead men and has an encounter with death himself. But he refuses to accept the idea of death. In another dream, he sees the swollen face of a dead man whom he had seen in the previous dream. He finds it coming toward him and he feels its bristles
and the cold pressure of the nose, the lips seem to kiss him on the temple with a laugh and a groan. The nearness of death is implanted on every face. The groan and laugh of the dead man indicate the inevitable condition of being human, being mortal, a condition shared by all men.

Joseph is also shocked by the suddenness and inevitability of death. The novel thus offers various insights to Joseph. These insights that he gains is brought to a focus, in the course of the novel, through his dialogues with the spirit of alternatives. Bellow makes use of these dialogues with a double advantage, one is that they help to view Joseph’s situation and the other is to arrive at the truth about Joseph through a process of self-analysis:

The quest, I am beginning to think, All the striving is for one end, 
But it seems to me that its final end is the desire for pure freedom. 
We are all drawn toward the same creators of the spirit...to know what we are and what we are for, to know our purpose, to seek grace. (102)

The seeking of true freedom, in Joseph, parallels his vision of an ideal construction in life:

Well, it’s a lovely phrase. An ideal construction, obsessive device. 
There have been innumerable varieties; for study, for wisdom,
bravery, war. I could name hundreds of these ideal constructions, each with its assertions and symbols, each finding – in conduct, in God, in art, in money – its particular answer. (93)

Art is the symbolic concretization of unconscious desires. To Bellow and to Joseph art is important as symptoms of the unconscious and is a valuable avenue for opening wide vistas of unfulfilled dreams and desires. One of Joseph’s dream is the wish for an ideal construction. The thought of an ideal construction makes Joseph form various impressions about the same.

He is of the firm opinion that the highest ideal construction in life is, “the one that unlocks the imprisoning self”. Without taking into consideration the inherent formulation Joseph attempts to distinguish between the “public self” and the “true Self”. He is, often, eager to release the Real self from the shackles of the public self. Gradually, through the experiences in his life, Joseph gains knowledge about the True or Real self.

The condition prevailing in the world of Joseph is death and determinism, a world affected by the Second World War and perhaps it is because of the effect of war he becomes more conscious of morality. Joseph admits that he lives in a world in which everything is imposed
upon him. And he is thrown into occasions in which he is forced to commit follies and hence his life passes on without any significance. Therefore a life of true freedom appears important to Joseph’s. He struggles to assert his freedom and rebels against the existing conditions of his life so that he may find a better living. He tries to reject the fear of death. Later he accepts the truth regarding death. The truth is that death is inevitable. The novel not only envisions the truth regarding death but it also imparts many relevant ideas related to freedom and the use of leisure.

In the early part of the novel Joseph does not realize the importance of leisure at his disposal. Later he is able to find a way to spend his leisure in a useful manner. He decides to write biographical essays. His wife Iva supports him in his endeavor, monetarily. He becomes dependent on his wife, and the idea that he is dependent and without a job has a psychological effect on him. So his efforts to engage himself turn futile, and he is unable to read or write. It appears that through Joseph the novelist expresses his own thoughts and ideas, proclaiming that if one does not know to make use of the time and liberty at his disposal he would become a bitter man ending his positive qualities. This idea is represented through Joseph:
I have thought of going to work, but I am willing to admit that I do not know how to use my freedom and have to embrace the flinkydom of a job because I have no resources – in a word, no character...I am deteriorating storing bitterness and spite which eat like acids at my endowment of generosity and good will. (9)

This experience unravels the truth that in a world of deteriorating values one cannot nurture generosity and good will. Joseph finds his present state filled with unworthy actions and thoughts. So freedom, to Joseph, becomes a peril in which he sinks himself. He seems to impart Bellow’s warning that if an individual does not know to manage his freedom, he may drown in it.

He collects information about his neighbors, but never wishes to be in their company, so he becomes totally dependent on the thoughts in his mind. He contemplates on people around him. He reads books on Poetry and Life, but is unable to concentrate on reading. Later as requested by his wife Iva, he leaves for her mother's house. Joseph’s stay there makes him uneasy and he openly admits his dislike to stay there. He returns home, on the way he reflects on the life led by various people. At home he observes the landscape from a window, it appears unpleasant.
He reflects:

There could be no doubt that these billboards, streets, traps, harness, ugly and blind, were related to interior life, and yet, I told myself that there had to be a doubt. There were human lives organized around these ways and houses...what men created they also were, through some transcendent means I could not bring myself to concede, there must be a difference, a quality that eluded me somehow differences between things and persons otherwise the people who lived there were actually a reflection of the things they lived among. (17)

Joseph observes details regarding the animate and inanimate objects in life and reflects on the same. He concludes that there is only barrenness in human life. Therefore he goes in search of a deeper meaning beyond all these material man made objects. This philosophic bent of mind of Joseph is given full reign when he makes an official search, a search to find a job and this only stimulates his personal quest. He begins to measure his life and he dangles between the world of action which is material, and the ideal world of thought, between detachment and involvement, between life and death. It teaches him the truth about the disparity between the ideal world and the real world. He finds the world divided because of various activities. Thus the protagonist is
perceived as an intense idea man in whom, "philosophical analysis is totally natural". He continues to think about his present status and thinks of the past, remembering the old Joseph, he contemplates that very little about the Joseph of a year ago had pleased him. So he cannot help laughing at him and at some of his traits and sayings. Joseph who is aged twenty, generally things of himself to be one who had lived well. But on close examination he appears to be somewhat peculiar. He is a person greatly concerned with keeping intact and fine from a sense of his own being and its importance. Yet he is not abnormally cold nor is he egoistic. He keeps a light hold because, as he himself explains he is keenly intent on knowing what is happening to him.

These reflections reveal to him certain truths about history and life. And he vaguely remembers historical evidences that support this truth "man was born the slayer of his father and of his brother, full of instinctive bloody rages licentious and unruly from his earliest days" but the old Joseph, "could find in himself no such history of hate overcome". The old Joseph was one who believed in his own mildness and believed in it piously. Likewise, he believed in his own goodness and in the goodness of others like him.

The tension of war brings the disruption of the old Joseph's plans and the creation of the new Joseph. His confidence is shaken, and his
values are undermined, and the plans for the future are as uncertain as his
dangling stance in the present. He understands and admits the truth that
life is less rejoicing and more painful:

I am tired of having to identify a day as ‘the day I asked for a
second cup of coffee’, or ‘the day the waitress refused to take back
the burned toast’, and so want to blaze it more sharply, regardless
of the consequences perhaps, eager for consequences. Trouble, like
physical pain makes us actively aware that we are living and when
there is little in the life we lead to hold and draw and stir us, we
seek and cherish it preferring embarrassment or pain to
indifference. (55)

He continues to reflect on life in this world and he contemplates
that life on this earth is a struggle filled with faith and destiny and other
ideas of salvation. Man is responsible for his destiny, “We were
important enough then for our souls to be fought over. Now, each of us is
responsible for his own salvation which is in his greatness. And that, that
greatness, is the rock our hearts are abraded on” (59). He refers to words
like morning, livelier and rejuvenation. But he observes that the idea of
rejuvenation may be impossible in a world of defeated wastelanders:
Morning began dull and numb, then brightened miraculously, I tramped the neighborhood. It was warm in earnest at one o’clock, with a tide of summer odors from the stockyards and the servers...In the upper light there were small fair heads of cloud turning. The streets, in contrast, looked burnt out, the chimneys pointed heaven ward...The grass behind the palings and wrought – iron frills was still yellow, although in many places the sun had already succeeded in shaking it into livelier green...This atmosphere, I say, was one of an impossible hope, the hope of an impossible rejuvenation. (114)

He contemplates further on the evil activities in this world. He reflects on the faults committed by men:

Debaters in midnight cafeterias who believed they could be great in treachery and catch the threats of those they felt were sound and well in the lassos of their morbidity...because of those things. We hate immoderately and punish ourselves and one another immoderately...the fear lies in us like a cloud. It makes an inner climate of darkness. And occasionally there is a storm and hate and wounding rain out of us. (59-60)
These expressions reveal Joseph as a thinker who craves more for an ideal world devoid of evil. It expresses his earnest desire for a world that could prevail with goodness and moral consciousness.

The experiences that Joseph encounters and the affairs he has with women, his reaction to these affairs signify Joseph’s self in development. He discusses details about love and marriage with his associate Kitty. But these pleasures are of little interest to him. Joseph who attempts to become conscious of the self and moral reality develops a different attitude, especially when he lives with Kitty. Suddenly a realization dawns within Joseph and he feels that:

As soon as I recognized it, I began to bring the affair with Kitty to a close. It died in the course of a long conversation, in which I made it clear that a man must accept limits and cannot give into the wild desire to be everything and everyone and everything to everyone. (65)

This decision of Joseph highlights his moral consciousness. It asserts his individuality. Similar inward transactions in Joseph enable him to modify his personality.

Joseph’s self in transition is made more apparent in his relationship with his wife Iva. Earlier, his relations with her appears complex but later
in-spite of his quarrel with her, he feels an attraction towards her. To illustrate the idea with an example, His mother-in-law suggests that it would be better to leave Iva with her when he goes for military service, but he feels reluctant to do so. Mrs. Almstadt again mentioned that she would like to have Iva with her when Joseph was drafted. But he said that there was time enough to decide. He was not ready to give up Iva for them. This consideration for his wife makes him celebrate their sixth wedding anniversary, and on this celebration, Bellow develops the main theme of the novel. On their way to the hotel Joseph sees the figure of a fallen man who “sprawls out in front of him”. The appearance and presence of this fallen man draws Joseph into the reality of existence and he learns the unpredictable nature of reality. This occurrence makes Joseph recall his mother’s death and he considers this to be a “Pre – vision” of mortality, and he feels that “without warning down a store, a girder, a bullet flashes against once head and then a blackness comes down. He feels that there is a great weight on one’s face, straining towards the last breath. This breath comes like the grilling of gravel under a heavy dread.

Bellow focuses the idea of the ultimate tenuousness of life through the activities in the life of Joseph. The result is that he finds in him an urge to respect the relentless process of nature. Joseph’s perception of this
concept slowly develops in him an increasing sense of affinity for Iva, especially when he is nursed by Iva. The warmth and affection that she showers on him becomes to him a means to transcend his earlier self-limitations. He basks in the sunshine of her warm affection and he perceives a great transformation in nature around him and as an effect of this he finds his room suffused with light, and observes the light gave an air of innocence to some of the common objects in the room liberating them from ugliness. So he losses the aversion, that he had hitherto felt. This sudden change or transformation in Joseph is brought about by the affection shown by Iva, so he concludes that it is love which makes the transcendence of ugliness and evil possible, a truth which he occasionally glimpses.

The above idea is according to Joseph the civilization of man. This civilization is an aid or a promoter to make one a “huntsman of himself” and “in turn a query”, a shoal driven towards the weirs, to present the idea differently is to say that Joseph is after self-knowledge:

I must know what “I myself am” this quest for the self occurs not in isolation but in relation to “Societal terrain”. For the idea branches off into social relations, its texture in which are included, the wrongs, errors in life, disgraces and fears of a life time. Often
Joseph asks questions like “What is this for” and “what am I for” and “am I made for this.” (102)

The idea of Joseph is that one can alienate oneself from all physical bonds like, “you can divorce your wife, or abandon your child, but what can you do with yourself.” The alienation of the self is not possible, only its realization is possible. Finally Joseph overcomes the problems in his life. He gets a job in the war front and he proceeds towards a new life: “This is my last civilian day, Iva has packed my things. It is plain that she could like to see me show a little more grief at leaving. For her sake, I would like to. And I am (at all) sorry to part with the test of it” (126). This assertion of Joseph, his enlisting in the war, helps him to identify himself with the community.

This novel about Joseph can be considered to be the most compelling study of the protagonists’ self in transition. The book throws light on the struggle of an individual who attempts to locate himself in an increasingly chaotic and technocratic world. Joseph is portrayed as the suffering hero of the novel and as the pathetic heir of the post-war fiction. He is pictured as a man craving for love and recognition and faces the anonymity of urban man.
Joseph seeks freedom in a meaningful world rather than in meaninglessness. The cause of his suffering is that he ‘dangles’ and withdraws himself from society. His odd position in society gives him leisure and the incentive to understand his real being. Moreover, Joseph is not unaware of his baseless, dullness or deterioration. He says that it is perfectly clear that he is deteriorating, storing bitterness and spite which eat like acids at his endowment of generosity and goodwill. He makes genuine and true observations and he is honest in introspecting his inner vices. He observes the baseness prevailing in society. He writes, “Here I have additional proof of my inability to read people properly to recognize the likelihood of baseness in them as natural in some as a blink, a nod, a flip of the hand” (78). He faces conflicts, frustrations, and pressures. His inner world and outer world are different and they give birth to a perennial conflict. Because of this he puts forth certain queries to himself and he contemplates:

Great pressure is brought to bear to make us undervalue ourselves. On the other hand, civilization teaches that each of us is an inestimable prize. There are, then these two preparations; one for life the other for death. Therefore we value and are ashamed to value ourselves...So coolly, as if he were examining his finger
nails, not his soul, frowning at the imperfections...to be of no significance...Who can be the earnest huntsman of himself. (79)

Joseph continuously raises questions that refer to the individual soul and to an inner hunt throughout the novel. He admits that his conscience strikes at him often “It’s in the line of duty...you know how it is. I am harried, pushed, badgered, worried, nagged, heckled...By what? Conscience” (109). Therefore Dangling Man is seen to be the creation of a highly introspective novel. The writer invites us to recognize that this novel is conceived with the grain of moral wisdom and current idols. Joseph is graced by what he calls “Consummating glimpses” of life’s underlying mystery. He is vigilant towards the life of “his soul” but he fails to find meaning or purpose in existence, continuously through rational analysis and this erects in him a psychic wall that seals him off from any lasting illumination related to the self. But he is graced by the faith or necessary trust by which a human being could make sense of his life.

At the end of the novel, Joseph goes as pointed out by Daniel Fuchs who has stated that one can go “as far” as the “will go towards religion”. It is at this juncture that he envisions what he calls “pure freedom” in spiritual rather than existential terms – as the freedom to seek grace and assert that one should know the meaning and purpose of the life
that he leads. Critics have identified his outlook with that of the French existentialists. M. Gilbert Porter who describes Joseph’s perception of his condition refers to this freedom using Sartre’s well-known phrase, “Condemned to freedom”. Sartre’s impressions on freedom covers existential philosophy. It is the idea that, man’s real nature can be projected only through his experiences and existence. He is not defined by a common quality of human nature. According to Sartre, freedom can become, “dreadful responsibility.” So man has anguish and he is responsible for his action and it’s consequences. He is to bear and solve the issue of his freedom absolutely alone. (Fuller 611-12: con.2, ch.37, sec.5) These thoughts of Sartre are obviously illustrated through Joseph’s life.

In contrast, however, to Sartre’s vision of an absurd universe, Joseph’s understanding of “Pure freedom” is teleological – the freedom “to know what we are for”. It is freedom defined, as Fuchs observes, in Dostoevskian fashion, not simply as free will but “will defining itself as spirit”. The idea implicit in this perception of freedom can be taken to be the religious concept of “binding”. This idea can be said to be the attachment to a higher purpose, a transcendent or divine principle through which the human being can discover the “Pure freedom” which can be said to be identical with “purity of the heart. The ability according to Joseph is to stop living so exclusively and vainly for one’s own sake.
And this life according to him is impure and unknowing that make an individual turn inward and self fastened. Therefore Joseph finds happiness and true freedom in community service.

Through this study of *Dangling Man* it can be concluded that most of Bellow's protagonist are often troubled by the discovery of their true self. The problems of the self are various. It is internal and external, physical and metaphysical, historical and transcendental. But the queries that these individuals, Joseph, make are about the real nature of the self. Some critics observe the novelist to be an advocate of the self. Others find him to be an affirmer of the society. However a strong sense of self seems to be the greatest concern of the Bellovian protagonist, Joseph.

**The concept of the self in The Victim**

The individual who discovers his true self may enjoy a state of serenity and may accept the society in which he lives. He may remain detached from society. He may not be hostile to it. The protagonist, Asa Leventhal of *The Victim* attempts to realize his true self, his noble nature. In the process of identification he is haunted and troubled by Kirby Albee. Due to the haunt he feels uncomfortable in his society. Therefore he tries to avoid Albee. He locks himself in his room. In Bellow's
contours of self perception, Leventhal’s self is depicted in struggle with another individual, Albee.

**Philosophy in *The Victim***

In the novel Bellow depicts the difficulties of his times rather than its triumphs. Leventhal’s life is set in New York and is pictured as a materialistic world which seems to him cruel and oppressive. Occasionally it is also as hot as Bangkok. The whole continent seems to have moved from its place and slid near the equator. The hot atmosphere reflects the interior suffocation of Leventhal.

The moral dilemma of the individual, Leventhal, is depicted through the plot of the novel. He continuously thinks that he deserves suffering for his faults. The problem of Leventhal is represented by various critics. Clayton had stated that the theme of the book is concerned with the casting off of the self imposed burdens by learning to accept oneself and others rather than to judge and blame and by learning to have an open heart. Through this work Bellow has attempted to reveal the true beauty and dignity of the human being but this beauty and dignity can be realized only by admitting that one is merely human and by accepting others rather than blaming oneself and others.
**The Victim: Short Summary**

*The Victim* is set in the city of New York and follows the third person form in narration. The protagonist, Leventhal has a job as an editor on a trade magazine board. Leventhal is a Jew and he has a friend Albee, a Gentile, who arranges an interview for Leventhal with his employer. Leventhal's interview is not successful; it only erupts violence and proves disadvantageous to Albee, for he loses his job. Albee thinks that Leventhal is responsible for the loss of his job and he haunts Leventhal by chasing him round the city. He appears at odd hours in the apartment of Leventhal demanding money as compensation for his loss, so Leventhal begins to fear Albee and tries to escape from him. He is unable to avoid him. Albee follows Leventhal and hints at Leventhal's spiritual timidity saying, "You keep your spirit under lock and key, its safe and tame and never leads you toward anything risky nothing dangerous and nothing glorious, nothing ever tempts you to dissolve yourself" (qtd in Yadav 12). This makes Leventhal admit partial responsibility towards Albee. He acknowledges that he has lost human sympathy in the case of Albee and reconciles with him. Eventually Leventhal realizes that, "everything...took place as if within a single soul or person". Albee follows Leventhal and interferes in the activities of his life. Therefore he is haunted by feelings of guilt and paranoia. Finally, he overcomes these fears by introspection and accepts Albee.
The Self and Moral Consciousness in Leventhal

The novel is not only a record of Leventhal's experiences but it is also an expression of his inner thoughts and outlook on life. Most hero's of Bellow attempt to find a meaning outside reality and they get victimized in this process. In analysing the work it can be stated that The Victim is an extension of the ideas with which Joseph is pre-occupied in Dangling Man. It raises fundamental problems of the self. The heroes seem to contemplate on the nature of self and it's freedom from earthy ties. In Bellow's world of fiction the individual is pictured as an integral part of the society. The character of Leventhal is shaped as a part of the society. His reflection on the functioning of the society and his judgement of the people around him enable him to transform his individual self. The status of the individual, Leventhal, becomes apparent only on the societal level.

Leventhal considers the evil within the nature of every man and thinks that he should overcome and suppress this evil in him in order to know and attain the concept of the self. He perceives a sea bound tanker and observes the objects in and around. The objects seem to have a glow, a bright light above them. He relates this light to the light or yellow brightness in the eye of every animal and the light which is also
implanted in every human being:

A tanker, sea bound, went across the ferry’s course and Leventhal stared after it...the towers on the shore rest up in huge blocks scorched, smoky, grey and bare while where the sun was direct upon them. The notion brushed Leventhal’s mind that the light over them and over the water was akin to the yellow revealed in the slit of the eye of a wild animal, say a lion, something in human that didn’t care about anything human and yet was implanted in every human being too. (47)

This picture that the protagonist perceives suggests the contrasts in life like good and evil. It is apparent in every human being. Words like scorched, smoky, grey, sun, light and yellow depict the contrast. Leventhal is often conscious of this contrast and he considers the evil to be anti – humanism which often overpowers him. Leventhal tries to avert the idea of anti-humanism in order to refine himself. So he asks, what is it that man is to be? What sort of life is he to lead? The inner consciousness of Leventhal motivates him to make similar queries.

Leventhal realizes that somebody is haunting him and watching him. His inner consciousness discovers this truth. He realizes it when he is engaged in daily affairs, “he had yesterday closed the bathroom door
before getting into bed, but he had left the light on. This was absurd, this feeling that he was threatened by something while he slept. And that was not all” (26). Such expressions express an inner awareness existing within Leventhal. The awareness is made apparent through Leventhal’s thoughts:

When suddenly he had a feeling that he was not merely looked at but watched, unless he was greatly mistaken a man was scrutinizing him, pacing slowly with him as the line moved, ‘he seems to know me’, he thought...one of these guys who want you to think. They can see to the bottom of your soul. (27)

This idea is made more obvious through the scene when he imagines the ringing of a bell in his apartment. He is sure that somebody has operated the bell, so he goes out to identify the person, but fails in locating the person.

The protagonist, Joseph of Dangling Man longs to be an active member of the society, whenever he is alone he has a feeling of loneliness and Leventhal of The Victim senses the same solicitude more in the absence of his wife, “The flat was once unbearably empty, he hoped some one had remembered, that Mary was away and had come to keep him company” (25). This trait in him is tempered by the reserved nature in him and this reserve is an aid through which he is in busy imagination
and it is obvious when he recalls instantly Albee’s name. This is an example of Leventhal’s instinctive acceptance of his ties with the society and community. But he attempts to avoid such realization. He is interested in establishing his individual self. Therefore he ventures to establish his self through his endeavors and not by the support of another individual. So he denies the influence of Albee on him. He proclaims that Albee hadn’t return to him. He hasn’t thought of Albee in the recent years. He also does not care about Albee’s existence, so Leventhal wanted to insist that he cannot have any ties with the society. But he is unable to do so, Leventhal attempts vainly to break down his tie with the society inorder to proceed towards the concept of the self but he is unable to do so for he’s disturbed by communal ties. These delay his intense search for the self.

Many details about Leventhal are disclosed to him by Albee. Albee had collected many details about Leventhal and his apartment. Leventhal understands this truth through a series of conversations between himself and Albee. It expresses one of the recurring motifs in Bellow’s fiction. It is that one’s private self exists as a device for social survival. Leventhal is startled to know that Albee has many details about him. “How do you know” Leventhal insisted “I just happen to. Is it some kind of a secret? Isn’t anybody allows to know that you live on the fourth floor”. The irony
implicit in these lines is that one's private self and its awareness disappear when the individual functions as a member of his society.

Leventhal’s response to Albee is that Albee is prying into his ‘private’ affairs. He feels that he had been singled out and was the object of some insane and freakish process. And later it appears that Albee is a mere surrogate for Leventhal, an extension of his alter ego. Albee often meets Leventhal. He comes to stay with Levnethal at his home. They discuss about life and its ups and downs. Albee gets into difference of opinion with Leventhal and he blames Leventhal for his ruin. Leventhal wonders at Albee’s behavior, for Albee suddenly attacks and blames him. Leventhal’s observation of Albee makes him think of the inequality in the society.

Later Leventhal discusses Albee’s problem with Mr. Harkavey. They agree that Albee’s drunkeness is responsible for his act. Soon Albee minimizes his visit to Leventhal’s home. So Leventhal stays at home, and everything appears inviting and convincing. “The morning, with its brilliance and its simple contrasts, white and blue, shining and darkened had balancing effect on him of which he was conscious” (83). The word conscious, light, white are often used by the novelist and these words can be said to suggest an inner – reality, the presence of the authentic self within every individual. The reference to Leventhal’s clean white shirt
can also be related to the chastity and purity in man. Leventhal engages in deep thoughts, he contemplates:

You couldn’t expect people to be right, but only try to do what they must. Therefore hideous things were done, cannibalistic things. Things as well, of course, but even there nothing really good were safe. There was something in people against sleep and dullness together with the caution that led to sleep and dullness. Both were there Leventhal thought. We were all the time taking care of ourselves, laying up, storing up, and watching out on this side and on that side, and at the same time running, running desperately. (85)

In fact Leventhal is an extension of the pervasive type of ‘dangling man’. Leventhal represents a subtle amalgamation of the fatal tenuousness of individual existence and the precarious clinging to life.

The events in Leventhal’s life and his relationship with human beings intensify his inward search. He finds an opportunity to meet Williston, friend to Albee, who is interested in Albee’s welfare. He throws many questions to Leventhal about Albee. They conclude that Albee’s nature had thrown him out of job and not because of Leventhal’s faults. But Leventhal feels that to a certain extent he had been responsible
for Albee’s present condition. Williston shows eagerness to know, ‘what
was happening to Albee’. After the discussion Leventhal moves home
and reflects on his mistakes and makes an analysis of his affair with
Albee. This inward analysis awakens his consciousness and he is unable
to sleep peacefully. He is disturbed by a striking sound, a deep rolling
noise, tremor, thunder and storm. These disturbances can be represented
as alarms of moral consciousness in Leventhal. He is eager to realize and
identify his noble nature. The identification is indicated by Leventhal’s
awareness of thunder and storm, “A deep rolling noise awakened him. He
thought...it came from below out of the subway. But there was no
accompanying tremor. He soon placed the sound outside and above him.
It was thunder he looked out. There had been a storm” (116). These
natural changes indicate to Leventhal the need for self-realization.

Leventhal is described as one with a philosophical bent of mind.
He is often conscious of the presence of an inner reality within every
man. Because of this trait in him he reflects on the life led by people in
this world, especially Albee’s strange behavior to which Leventhal
responds:

Are you in your right mind? Leventhal demanded, ‘Are you
straight in the head? Is it the booze or what? God almighty!
Everyday I see new twists. He looked Heavenward and gave way
to a short laugh, so help me, it's like a menagerie. They say you go to the zoo to see yourself in the animals. There aren't enough animals in the world to see ourselves in there would have to be a million feathers and tails. There's no end to the twists. (121)

Leventhal who is entangled with the ties of life, often reminds himself and others of the need to take up the right path which is due to the awareness of the self within. The words "right mind," "God Almighty" and "Heavenward" suggest the idea that man is potentially divine. But the divinity gets dimmed in an individual who lives amidst deteriorating values. The above words may also seem irrelevant when he confronts a world of evils.

Leventhal further observes that, "I deserve what I get, no, if man is down, its his fault he's punished. There is no evil in life itself...God doesn't make mistakes...Nothing ever tempts you to dissolve yourself" (122, 123). This observation asserts that the finding of the self that great men have stressed to be the goal of every individual can be developed by one's disciplined behavior. Otherwise an individual is to reap the consequences of his life. Similar thought provoking ideas are often expressed by Leventhal.
He is portrayed as a man of strong emotions. He is unable to bear Albee’s behavior and attitude towards him. This drives him even towards the intention of murdering Albee. Leventhal’s ‘busy imagination’ becomes obvious in the manner in which he recalls Albee’s name and he wonders, “He had never liked this Albee, but he had never really thought much about him. How was it, then that his name came to him so readily? He had a poor memory for his names, still he saw the man and recognized him in a moment” (28). The pang of recognition – spontaneous and instinctive – implicit here is an early premonition of the predicament in which Leventhal is placed; his rational negation and yet instinctive acceptance of his ties with the community.

Leventhal is suddenly gripped with the feeling that he had been singled out and that it is because he is to be the, “object of some freakish, insane process and for an instant he was filled with dread” (31). So Leventhal is induced to bypass the real implication of his encounter with Albee, which is an attempt detected by the shrewd Albee. “you’re out spoken, but are you leading away from the main thing? You are, it’s a manoeuvre, I don’t know whether you are smart or crude. May be you don’t even care much about the main thing” (32). The conversation suggests the idea that Leventhal is responsible for Albee’s loss of job and in retrospect it acquires a structural and thematic significance as the
prologue to the drama in which Albee is merely a surrogate for Leventhal. Albee may be considered as Leventhal’s alter-ego and grotesque exaggeration. A great deal of Leventhal’s background is told in the novel but much detail is not given about Albee’s life in detail, before his encounter with Leventhal. Therefore, Albee remains somewhat a mystery to Leventhal. The idea implicit is that any human personality is never wholly explicable and that Leventhal, before his confrontation with Albee, has been a stranger to himself. It is significant that Albee does not wait to meet Leventhal at his apartment but Albee traces him to the park. “This public place of rest and relaxation is in itself a fitting locale to the complex theme of the private self and its accountability for every other self” (48). After this encounter, which has its own ramifications, the truth about the self and society is revealed to Leventhal. He comes to know that the private self of an individual cannot extricate itself from the public self. The idea gets registered in Leventhal’s psyche. Leventhal begins to analyse it against the typical backdrops of urban anonymity. He wonders whether the predicament of Albee is due to suffering:

Of course suffering Leventhal told himself gravely, down and out living in a mouldy hotel somewhere, hanging out in bars, sleeping whole days, picked up off the streets by the paddy wagon or the ambulance, haunted in his mind by wrongs or faults of his own which he turned into wrongs against himself; and that stirring
around of the thoughts and feelings, that churning—everybody experienced it, but for a man like that it must be ugly, terrible, those thoughts wheeling around. (36)

The passage indicates, that Leventhal can respond to physical suffering. This capacity to respond is suggested by the structural parallel implicit in the sickness of Leventhal's brother's child Micky. The child dies in the hospital and Leventhal suffers pangs of guilt, for he insisted on the child being hospitalized and he ignores the appeal. So he thinks that he is responsible for the child's death. Moreover this happens just when Leventhal feels himself inextricably trapped by Albee's accusations and in his confused state he believes or seems to believe that Albee's accusations are somehow justified in Mickey's death. It explains Leventhal's innate capacity to respond to suffering. The capacity to respond, his feeling of guilt and other such concerns and responses are due to the presence of the awareness of the self within. Any individual conscious of the 'I' concept would often respond to these problems and suffering in humanity.

Elena's child and its sickness raise problems of the nature of love and its role in social, especially familial relations. Leventhal reflects as to whether love in itself was value denuded of all negative, effects. He
makes many queries as to whether the mother, in spite of this love, is accountable or not if something happens to the child:

Love by all means but because the mother and the child were tied together in that way, if the child died through her ignorance, was she still a good mother? Should someone else – he thought of it seriously have the right to take the child away? Or should that fate of the two of them be considered one and the same, and the child’s death said to be the mother’s affair only because she would suffer most by its death? In that case the child was not regarded as a person, and was that fair? Well, that was the meaning of helplessness that was what they meant when they said it. (48)

From the above lines it is clear that the musings of Leventhal raises fundamental problems about the nature of the individual self and its mode of recognition necessary for coming to terms with it. He ponders continuously and observes the coming of darkness and contemplates on the change in atmosphere. His thoughts are about the setting sun, brilliant embers of clouds-grey and blue, red lights and gold bits of light. These thoughts of the setting sun, the change of colors and reference to light can be represented as different emotions and feelings in man which when conquered would make apparent the light within.
Leventhal’s self (the inner light) and its awareness is made possible through the presence of Albee. Albee is pictured as a force that leads Leventhal towards the consciousness of the self. He also appears the outward force which awakens the theological aspects in Leventhal. When both discuss about religion Albee insists that one should “know thyself”. He asks Leventhal to, “Repent! That’s John the Baptist coming out of the desert, change yourself, that’s what he’s saying and be another man, you must be and the reason for that is that you can be, and when your time comes here you will be” (185). The idea of repentance is depicted as the essential motif for self awareness.

Albee further says “not religious or anything like that, but I know that I don’t have to be next year what I was last year. I’ve been at one end and I can get to the other. There’s no limit to what I can be and even if I should miss being so dazzling, I know the idea of it is genuine” (185). These views on religion, reference to repentance, use of words, “dazzling”, “genuine” reveal the philosophic ideas of Leventhal. Mr. Harkavey is another character in the novel whose acquaintance helps Leventhal to become aware of moral consciousness. Later Leventhal is unable to remain in his room so he moves out of it and finds the house to be empty and with unexpected silence. He finds an opportunity to meet Mr. Harkavay who is alone for his family had left to Island city. Both
pick up conversation and discuss Harkavay’s mother, who is an expert in managing all affairs excellently well. Harkavey is able to note the problem that was weighing down Leventhal and he wanted him to confess the truth, so that he could be relieved from his burden “That’s not good. It’s dishonest wake up! What’s life? Metabolism. That’s what it is Jesus Christ, no! What’s life? Consciousness, that’s what it is. That’s you’re short on. For God’s sake, give yourself a push and a shake” (214). Likewise, other characters in the novel play a vital role in awakening the protagonist towards the awareness on the consciousness of the self.

Eventually Leventhal learns to understand others and accepts their way of life. This makes him calmer. He regains peace and sleeps calmly. His wife Marry comes to live with him and they decide to begin a new life. Mr. Harkavay offers Leventhal a job in ‘Antique Horizon’; this makes his life more comfortable. The only problem to be solved is that with Albee and this also gets solved quickly. Albee who meets him asks apology for his behaviour in the past. He is ready to come to terms with Leventhal and would not trouble him anymore. He has a job in Advertising and he would go about with his life peacefully without disturbing Leventhal, “I’m the type that comes to terms with who ever runs things. What do I care? The world wasn’t made exactly for me. What am I going to do about it?...will have to be good enough. All that
stiffness of once upon a time, that’s gone, that’s gone” (238). The stiffness that Leventhal has, eventually, gives away and he reconciles with the forces that disturb him.

Leventhal is pictured as a man whose burden is his pride, which is the very antithesis of true human dignity. But he learns the way of the world and he realizes his moral duty towards Kirby Albee and comes to know and understand facts regarding humanism, the exact idea being human. He finds humanism in love, in understanding and in overcoming the stiffness of life. After learning this truth he accepts Albee and shows concern for others. He learns facts about being more than human which is related to the idea of God. These reflections assert Leventhal’s transformation.

The friends of Leventhal and other characters in the novel are pictured as motivators who make him realize his moral duty towards others, the Gentile. Schlossberg, the Yiddish painter, explains to him what is to be human. Leventhal’s consciousness of the self makes him accept the ideas of others, and he acknowledges everything with an open heart. The following words of Schlossberg are remarkable in their thrust
of what is meant by “to be human”:

It’s bad to be less than human and it’s bad to be more than human—what’s more than human? Caesar in the play wanted to be like a God, can a God have diseases? So this is a sick man’s idea of God. Does a statue have wax in its ears? Naturally not. It does not sweat, either except may be bleed on holidays...we only know what it is to die because some people die and if we make ourselves different from them, may be we don’t have to? Less than human is the other side of it—good acting is what is exactly human. More than human, can you have any use for life? Less than human, you don’t either. (112-113)

The problem of ‘to be human was very acute in that period because few were exactly human and some were more than human and some less than human. Joseph strikes this issue in Dangling Man when he regards the idea to be more than human as living in ideal constructions. It is merely an attempt to become a God and thus to remove oneself from humanity and get dehumanized. To be less than human is to feel like wild animals. To be human means to confront inhuman elements within and without. Leventhal is more than human because he blames everybody—Elena, Max, Albee and others, and does not recognize that man is fallible. But Leventhal who has the inclination towards morality develops a
gradual awakening to become conscious of such things, a concern for others, common human destiny, sad plight of the less fortunate and social responsibility.

The novel closes with the understanding and the accepting of Albee by Leventhal and vice versa. Both consider themselves to be victims. They gain human dignity by reconciliation. This reconciliation is made possible because of the presence of the inner reality or the noble nature within an individual. Albee thinks that he is the victim because he is deprived of his service and is driven to poverty and also because he has lost his wife. Leventhal feels himself to be the victim for he had to take up so much economic burden, has been persecuted by Albee, and disbelieved by friends and associates. The fact is that each one has a projection of one's own guilt in the other. Finally a realization dawns upon them and they share responsibility and regain human dignity. Albee feels sorry for what he had done to Leventhal. He explicitly utters, "I have made my peace with things as they are. I’m on the train. I’m not the type that runs things. Wait a minute, who runs things?" (238). Leventhal asks him promptly but remains unanswered. Leventhal is also enlightened, as his moral judgment and social ethos are modified now with love and duty towards the fallible. The life presented in the novel has touches of naturalism and existentialism as the then society was a
mass society which operated under all pressures and is presented in the novel as such. Bellow’s voice is the reflection of this society and to seek and convince man that reality of experience of life-call it what one will, is worth all the agonies of human existence. Thus Leventhal can be seen to be an ordinary figure moderately successful and content to mind his own business.

In analyzing the novel it can be concluded that the protagonist who is aware of the idea of the self and moral consciousness, develops concern for others, and comes to terms with Albee, with whom he had been at odds from the beginning. He also becomes aware of his social responsibility. Albee also accepts Leventhal. The incidents and the characters in the novel are portrayed in such a way that they reveal the existence of an inner reality. The protagonist comes to accept people and he shows concern for them and realizes the importance of social responsibility. The presence of moral consciousness in Leventhal enables him to undergo a transformation in his attitude and outlook.