CHAPTER VI
SUMMING UP

The present age is an age of super science and super technology, but this post-modern civilization has many flaws in it. It is capable of fostering madness, materialism and even gives misleading knowledge. Modern technology has made life more comfortable but each day one is reminded of the disorienting nature of modern civilization. One can feel very obviously the general characteristics of the age-alienation, fragmentation, break with tradition, isolation, threat of the void, loss of moral values, and hatred of civilization itself. Man has to surely fight against these negative tendencies of the society in order to survive physically and intellectually. The outbreak of World War I and the ensuing senseless destruction challenged belief in humanism, uprooted the prevailing system and gave rise to alienation. The increasingly materialistic society and the decaying moral order affected human relationships. Wasteland and Darkness became metaphors to describe the modern world. Writers like George Orwell presented a negative Utopia. In Nineteen Eighty Four he says: “If you want a picture of the future imagine a boot stamping a human face forever.” In Second Coming W.B.Yeats described the era through the powerful image of a: “rough beast slouching towards Bethlehem to be born.” However Yeats affirmed life through the symbol of Byzantium. In The Waste Land T.S. Eliot evoked the Vedanta philosophy of “Datta, Dayadhvam, Damyata” to find peace in the modern wilderness. World War II and the Holocaust swept aside these attempts to transcend despair. The horrors of the Nazi camps gripped mankind with such fears that the post-war European literature dealt with rootlessness, absurdity, monotony, disgust, fear, pessimism and so on. The war taught mankind the destructive nature of the atom bomb that can wipe out human race from the surface of the universe. This led to a sense of despair and a sense of loss of faith. Religious institutions which have become highly
secularized failed to instill faith and could not come out with proper solutions. Anarchy, violence and loss of faith in God and in oneself were the harsh realities of the modern world. Nietzsche’s cry that God is dead seemed to be true.

Saul Bellow, who has been exhaustively studied, both for his style and for his conscious involvement with the problems of contemporary men, attacks these characteristics of the modern age in his novels and presents his protagonists as intellectual survivors in spite of the fact they are demoralized by the negative tendencies of the modern age:

In a era in which alienation has been called the great 20th century malaise and bookshops are crowded with volumes diagnosing the ills of our complex, machine-driven age, a new voice has risen to champion the dignity and worth of modern man. The voice is that of Saul Bellow.

(Dekle81)

Bellow is deeply engaged in universal problems, worried about the destiny of humanity, a fact that places him among major contemporary writers. Good and evil, the nature of man, his response to love, death and the desire for power, are preoccupations in all his works, and by bringing changes to these classic themes in modern contexts, Bellow provides a wondrous variety and source of constant insight. In his novels, he explores the nature of contemporary man and the difficulties he encounters in his effort to integrate the self and the world. “Undeniably the human being is not what he commonly thought a century ago. The question nevertheless remains. He is something. What is he?” (Bellow 69) In each novel the Bellow hero tries to answer this question for himself. One of the dominant themes in his fiction is an attempt to explore and define man, to ascertain what human potential is and how it is to be developed. He sends the message that life is not always full of frustration. Life means love for oneself and love for fellow human beings. It also means
faith and confidence. He tells with great force: “We are not born to be condemned but to live.” (Qtd in Tanner44)

Bellow’s style, his themes and the basic categories of his thought are rooted in the economic, political, social and moral features of our technocentric society. His fiction is a response to the concrete circumstances, the one that we are living to-day, in which the rational and free individual appears to occupy a small and insignificant place. Much of Bellow’s work shows his commitment to the problem of modern selfhood. He sees the problem of the individual in the midst of the masses. He also sees the western world as complex and chaotic, lacking meaningful motivation and unity, which his protagonists are looking for. The economic structure of the society alone defines its social and moral structures. Authentic personal relationships are minimized and moral values are replaced by materialistic values. A relevant point in Bellow’s fiction is the search for values in a confusing, materialistic, alienated society. Another important aspect of contemporary society related to the individual is lack of identity. The concept of alienation and loss of identity are recognized as symptoms of modern man’s crisis. These lead to loss of self, powerlessness, anxiety, depersonalization, meaninglessness, isolation, pessimism, rootlessness, loss of belief and so on. These are the bitter consequences of the two world wars.

Red human blood flows in broad streets from one end of the earth to the other. Ever-expanding misery spreads its gloomy shadow over longer and larger areas. The fortunes, happiness and comfort of untold millions have disappeared. Peace, security and safety have vanished. Prosperity and well being have become in many countries but memory, freedom a mere myth. A great tornado sweeps, over the whole of mankind. (Sorokin15)
Realizing that he is no longer master of his own life man feels utterly helpless. He finds no purpose in life and feels alienated from his fellow beings and from his own self. The predominance of science and technology originates in him a sense of the meaninglessness of life. Man is replaced by machines so much so that the fountain of love has run dry. And life has been rendered mechanical and devoid of meaning. Man has been alienated from the mass. The theme of alienation has become predominant in the novels of Saul Bellow. The problem of alienation experienced by the Bellow heroes is neither geographical nor cultural. Instead, it is deeply rooted in the consciousness. Like the writers of existentialism, Bellow too represents the present crisis of man, his alienation from the outside world and from his own self. Bellow brings about a welcome change when he presents his alienated heroes. There is the portrayal of the human struggle against the inherent nothingness and the quest for a peaceful and meaningful existence. Innumerable possibilities are open to him, and man is totally free to choose and realize them.

Freedom is the basic condition of human existence and it is experienced all through man’s life and is never completely lost. Man becomes aware of the significance of freedom only when he actively involves himself in taking personal decisions and responsible actions. These alone can lead him to an authentic existence. It is in this state that he realizes his potentiality. Each individual has to make a personal understanding of the world and should make positive effort in using his will power to interpret, evaluate and survive. For man who is believed to be a rational being, the only way to survive intellectually is to follow the demands of reason. The entire life of man depends upon free will and free choice. The main purpose of Bellow’s philosophy is: “to make every man aware of what he is and to make the full responsibility of his existence rest on him.”(Sartre 18) Since man is totally free to choose his own values, he should choose and act in such a manner that the rest of humanity is guided by his actions. In short, man is responsible not
only for himself, but for all humanity. Bellow’s philosophy is optimistic since it affirms that man’s destiny is within himself and that he is wholly responsible for his life. Bellow is thus a humanist and his attempt has always been to sustain humanism and survival. Bellow’s protagonists reject the modern wasteland in favour of a more human experience. For Augie and Henderson the post-war culture is hostile but they live their lives not with total disgust and disillusionment. They always nourish hope and often exhibit their will power. They are no doubt sensitive and feel the emotional discomfort in the society, yet they try to transcend the ugliness and corruption that surrounds them. This they are able to do through moral values and spiritual values. They gain spiritual gratification and emerge as intellectual survivors.

Saul Bellow is firm about his affirmation of man’s potentialities. Most of the prominent writers of the modern age are depressed by nihilism but Bellow not only opposes the current nihilism but also emphasizes the power of man to emerge as an intellectual survivor. His main preoccupation in his works is to analyze the psychological profundity and complexity of his characters and at the same time ascertain that man is the supreme creation of God and therefore his value and dignity should be recognized. He firmly believes that human beings possess the potentiality for solving their own problems and that they are the masters of their own destiny. Man’s destiny is within himself. Bellow has faith in man’s capacity for doing great deeds, his capacity for transcending human limitations so as to lead a life of authenticity. In all his novels, Bellow shows his protagonists to be responsible for the particular condition. He presents their dilemmas, their conflicts, and their struggle to overcome their problems. At the same time, he affirms that they are capable of altering their conditions. In his creed of a positive affirmation of life, Bellow places supreme value on the individual, whom he considers capable of self realization, through freedom of the spirit. The protagonists obtain this absolute freedom
after fighting out all the conditions imposed on them and finally they get a true reconciliation of the self which is in fact intellectual survival for the Bellow protagonist.

Bellow does not believe in the philosophies of modern thinkers such as Heidegger, Sartre, Nietzsche, and others as their theories are mere abstractions and do not correspond to the reality of common man’s life in contemporary society. Bellow propagates in his fiction a prescribed way of life based on personal experience. Bellow displays in his works that there is an innate strength in man which takes expression only when he begins to resist the realities. For this he has to participate in the world of the common people. Through their participation in the world of common people, Bellow’s protagonists become aware of the truths of common life. They shed their egotism and they come closer to ordinary people and realize their relation with others. Unlike the writers of alienation and wasteland, Bellow creates a new humanism based on human integration and human dignity. Bellow further says that God gives us life and binds us to certain responsibilities. One has to live in such a world in spite of the social hazards and one has to fulfill the terms of social contract as said by the Bellow protagonist Mr. Sammler.

The protagonists of Saul Bellow are intellectuals, sufferers, strugglers, believers and above all survivors. They are humanists concerned with their dignity, humanity and community. Like the other post-war fictional heroes, Bellow’s early protagonists are victims of the disintegrated world and they are often unable to rise above their fate. However towards the end, there is a full emotional and intellectual awareness of the plight of the contemporary men coupled with the urge to emerge as intellectual survivors. This is possible because they gain the awareness of their responsibilities and powers. Joseph and Leventhal fail to recognize their human possibilities, as they are unable to see their true selves. Towards the end they are somewhat reconciled. Augie March and Tommy Wilhelm become aware of the dignity of human condition and try to become humane.
Henderson and Herzog have clear self-awareness and are reconciled with their humanness. Mr. Sammler also finally attains contentment. Each protagonist experiences a change from innocence or ignorance to self-knowledge, from inability to ability to cope with the urban world he inhabits. The protagonist’s interaction with the environment and the prevailing condition, leads him towards self-development and self-transformation. It is actually an educative process. With each experience, the protagonist learns something, corrects his short comings and comes to terms with himself. He strengthens himself, understands his limitations and achieves a strong, positive, healthy self-image. During his quest, he moves towards the final encounter which brings him self-realization. What makes the intellectual protagonists of Saul Bellow differ from others is his intense craving to know and explain everything mentally. He is an intellectual who is concerned about the shape of things in the present and also in the future. Armed with the vast heritage of western thought, he tries to put order into his chaotic world. He is on the brink of a breakdown when the novel opens. He suffers from professional failure, personal failure and financial hardships. He is in search of human values, for spiritual and moral truth, for a new world, for a new life. This is a psychological process in which all his potentialities are realized. He acquires a new humanistic vision which transforms his old ideas and attitudes and also his philosophy of life. He emerges as a new, confident man of action. This even enables him to adjust psychologically to his adverse surroundings. His agitated mind calms down, he attains maturity, he experiences peace of mind and he survives intellectually.

The most impressive aspect of Bellow’s fiction is the psychology of his heroes. From Joseph to Mr.Sammler, Bellow’s characters have the same conflict. Each of his heroes hungers for what he knows is a decent life, for brotherhood, for communion with God. At the same time he is affected by the demands of his ego which insist upon freedom
and also understanding. The ego seeks to create an ideal self which is almost impossible. This drives them to go in search of special distinction and unique fates. When they are denied to them, they turn in disgust from their environment and from their own natures. They retreat from external strife to internal strife. They even seek a kind of a hide out. Subsequently they understand that perfect isolation is impossible and that they are forced to return to society. In the early two novels, *Dangling Man* and *The Victim* the protagonists gain self knowledge and not self acceptance. Augie March and Henderson gain valuable self knowledge that enables them to accept themselves and finally this leads the way to a better integration of the self and the world. All the protagonists are also able to come out of their ego clash which is indeed a triumph of the ego and not the destruction of it. They accept the inherent limits of life. They understand that they cannot cross these limits and finally intend to get united with the rest of mankind. They learn to love in order to do good to others. Henderson’s earlier love was tainted with ego. Then his well intended acts did not materialize. Later Henderson’s love for Lily, for Dahfu, for Romilayu, for the lion cub, for the orphan boy on the plane is a pure selfless and generous love untainted by ego and selfishness. To find love the Bellow hero also comes to terms with death in order to know the meaning of life and what it means to be human. Henderson overcomes his fear of death when he is buried and symbolically resurrected in Africa. Tommy Wilhelm confronts death in symbolic drowning. Mr. Sammler awaits the death of a person he values most in the world. Here Bellow contemplates the approaching death of western culture at the hands of those who have abandoned humanistic values.

Bellow’s novels are testimony to the triumph of the human spirit, for the novelist advocates the importance and strength of character to alter the circumstances. The quest for identity, the emotional frustration and the fragmented self, hopes unfulfilled, and
dreams denied are the problems that affect marginalized people everywhere. Bellow insists on the need to turn to inner resources for strength and equilibrium in order to survive. One can extract the best out of life, defeat alienation, disintegration and fragmentation and emerge as a survivor. There is every possibility of achieving wholeness in a world where we are all victims of something. The Bellow heroes are fully aware of the social realities in America that tend to drag them almost to the point of dehumanization. Bellow’s intellectual heroes are also fully aware of the reasons for their alienation from the rest of the society but they are unable to act in order to come out of their problem. They only think and this leads to more thinking and less action. They are unable to accomplish anything significantly which can reshape their world, but they manage to save themselves. They discover within themselves an essential force of life. They strive to resolve their dilemmas through a personal response directed toward the reconstruction of their souls. In this process, they prove that men still retain the necessary strength to save themselves from the demeaning forces of contemporary society.

Right from his first novel *Dangling Man* (1944) to *The Bellarosa Connection* (1989), Bellow’s works exhibit the emergence of a human being, who achieves a heroic stature through his determination to live and rise above the overwhelming conditions of life. Bellow attacks those novelists like James Joyce, Philip Roth and John Updike who fail to find an adequate answer to the malady of contemporary man and merely present a hero devoid of depth. It is wrong to believe that contemporary man is condemned to live a dreadful life. It is the duty of the artist to offer a proper way for human existence in the time of crisis. Bellow’s protagonists reject the modern wasteland in favour of a more human experience. For Augie and Henderson the post-war culture is hostile but they live their lives not with disgust but with hope and will. They are no doubt sensitive and feel the emotional discomfort in the modern society. However they transcend the ugliness that
surrounds them through moral and spiritual values. Their attempt is a redefinition of the self by which they gain spiritual gratification and they finally emerge as intellectual survivors. Bellow felt that as an artist it was his job to present precisely the pain and anguish that all felt. He also felt that it was the writer’s job to remind people of their common stock of emotions, of their common humanity. Bellow’s concern with social and personal destruction has been traced to European writers such as Flaubert, Dostoevsky, Kafka and Sartre. His fiction also has many ties with American literary circles. His transcendentalism and his identification with America link him to Emerson and Whitman.

In his novels Bellow often focuses on the lives of intellectual adventures of men in American cities, most often Chicago and New York. He won the Nobel Prize for literature for the human understanding and subtle analysis of contemporary culture. Both are properly are combined in his work. Bellow shows in his work an awareness of the fundamental problems of our technocratic society. He is aware of the position of man in contemporary society, which is mirrored in the structure of the novels, but he is also sensitive to the new tendencies that are emerging in the urban society. The contemporary world can be called urban due to the influences that the cities exert on the social life of men. For Bellow, the city is the living monument of man’s collective actions. The city seems to fascinate him due to its complicity. It is a place to which Bellow belongs and from which the raw material for his work emerges. Bellow, unlike Hemingway and Faulkner is entirely a city writer. Bellow’s cities - Chicago and New York are dense with people and noise, subways, smoke and filth. Joseph, living in a six-sided box within a Chicago room house, is victimized by the old man next door who coughs all night. The Victim begins: “On some nights New York is as hot as Bangkok.” (TV1)The subways, the sweat and listless crowds in the park and the struggle for air weigh upon Asa Leventhal. Augie’s Chicago is a “somber city” which provides no love, only Machiavellians who try
to influence Augie. The clutter of the city weighs down upon Tommy Wilhelm too.

Henderson, the African explorer also feels that the junk of the city is always at his back. Herzog disgusted with the city yearns for nature. Mr. Sammler everyday is embittered by the darker side of city life.

Bellow’s main characters are searchers in the city because Bellow is a city writer. It is the individual search for self and reality that drives them. In his novels, there is always a direct relationship between the chaos of the city and his protagonist’s fragmented condition. All his heroes are searchers not only for the reality of self but also of society. The city is the arena in which Bellow’s protagonists act and through their actions and their reflections they display the author’s own view of social reality, showing a society of increasing materialism and consumerism, with its false concepts of progress and prosperity. Thus in all his novels, there is a struggle between the protagonist’s humanism and social patterns. In *Dangling Man*, Bellow’s first novel, we see through Joseph, the attempt of the individual to establish a relationship with the world where the individual can remain himself without succumbing to society’s values. In *The Victim*, the protagonist’s: “deeper fear comes from the uncertainty about his position and stability in the cruel, indifferent chaos of the modern city.” (Tanner27) The acknowledgement of the urban masses is a great leap forward in the protagonist’s coming to terms with the city.

*The Adventures of Augie March* shows Augie, in the first half of the book, accepting the city uncritically, but there is a shift in the novel and by the end Augie’s disillusionment with Chicago is complete. In *Seize the Day*, Dr. Adler personifies social pressures inherent in the urban setting while Wilhelm, the protagonist rejects the materialistic world. Like Augie, Tommy Wilhelm is surrounded by Machiavellian urban characters who use him. In *Henderson the Rain King*, we see the protagonist trying to escape the pressures of society by going to Africa, where he still: “thinks in city metaphors and of city events; the city
maintain its pressures, and alive within his other speculations is the city idea of people, nameless, faceless, with whom no communication is possible.” (Malin209) In *Herzog*, Bellow reveals himself as a socially conscious thinker and his protagonist becomes more rational, conscious and critical. Herzog is affected by and suffers from the problems of the society of the city but though he is a sufferer, he finally rejects the nihilistic philosophies in favour of a positive attitude towards modern civilization, especially of the city. *Mr. Sammler’s Planet* shows a protagonist who has put his faith in reason, but who finds that he lives in an unreasonable world. He sees man as an intellectual creature that has the power of explaining but the modern man cannot find an explanation for the society he sees around him. The novel is full of social comments made by the intellectual Mr. Sammler. Images of the city are used throughout the novel to reflect his moods of sarcasm, despair and fear towards social pressures. To live in society means to exist under the domination of society’s logic.

Nature seems to provide the much needed atmosphere and mood for survival. All of Bellow’s heroes entertain a yearning for nature. Though Joseph dismisses his friend’s complaint of the treelessness of New York as sentimentality, the mood at the end is shifted to the spring season with Joseph’s resolution. Asa Leventhal, locked in New York’s inhuman heat, has moments of freshness and deep breathing at sea on the Staten Island ferry. Augie wants to own and settle on a Midwestern farm. Tamkin offers Tommy Wilhelm the blessing of nature when he says: “creative is nature.” Henderson clearly moves towards harmony with nature. Nature is a blessing which Bellow uses for survival. Bellow values human potential even in the bleakest moment and hence his novels end with an affirmative note. Augie March hails himself as a new Columbus, the rediscoverer of America. Henderson triumphantly returns home with happiness and hope, Herzog evades his fate and returns to society. Proud of their heritage, the Bellow heroes are usually
second-generation Jewish immigrants who seek to live meaningfully in America. Much of their ability to maintain their belief in humanity despite their knowledge of the world can be attributed to the affirmative nature of Jewish culture. They are to some extent separated from American society, but they strongly connect their identity with America. Augie begins his adventure by claiming: “I am an American, Chicago born.” Almost all of Bellow’s novels take place in an American city—New York or Chicago. Although the city serves to identity the social pressures and threatens to destroy civilization, Bellow’s heroes refuse to become its victims and instead draw vitality and they re-assert the American belief in individual freedom, as well as their faith in the possibility of community.

All of Bellow’s heroes seem to proclaim the priority of community as they realize fully well that the isolated condition undermines it. The main theme of The Adventures of Augie March is the struggle against cynicism. Bellow originally intended to give the title to the novel as Life among the Machiavellians. Grandma Lausch teaches Augie how to cheat. Simon a favourite of Grandma Lausch marries for money and power and tries to influence Augie to follow his footsteps. Augie is not a cynic. He retains a sense of dignity and a respect for life. He himself feels that he is trustful, and simple but surrounded by tough and cunning people. He clings to the conviction that there is a moral purpose in life.

Through Basteshaw, Bellow speaks about future where: “Every man will be a poet and every woman a saint. Love will fill the world. Injustice will go, and slavery, bloodshed, cruelty. They will belong to the past. . . . And then a new brotherhood of man will begin.” (AAM 509)

Augie March was able to remain composed even with his picaresque adventures with the axial lines of life. The axial lines of life helped him to resist the Machiavellians. Augie recommends this to his friend ClemTambow as: “the oldest knowledge, older than Euphrates, older than the Ganges.”(AAM 454) He further says:
He [man] will live with true joy. Even his pains will be joy if they are true, even his helplessness will not take him away from himself . . . even disappointment after disappointment need not take away his love. Death will not be terrible to him if life is not. (455)

Augie further tells his friend that this is not imaginary because he has experienced this all his life. For all the protagonists the central concern is: “How should a good man live? What ought he to do?” (DM 39) When Dr. Lal asks: “What is one supposed to do?” Mr. Sammler replies: “Perhaps the best is to have some order within oneself.” (MSP 188)

Bellow propagates the traditional values of humanity, hope, perseverance, peace, dignity, discipline, order and God. He speaks of an inner order among the new generation. His protagonists are able to preserve their moral integrity without succumbing wholly to the compulsions that would bend them. They are successful survivors, rather than victims. The survivor differs from the rebel and the victim by retaining his grip on the will-to-live, (Henderson’s grun-tu-molani), with compassion without which he is less than human, and has a bonding with the world. In the 1976 Nobel Award Speech, the Nobel committee praised Saul Bellow for his portrayal of: “a man . . . who can never relinquish his faith that the value of life depends on its dignity, not its success, and that the truth must triumph at last.” The value of life, according to Bellow depends more on its dignity than its success which is a triumph of truth. Despite all circumstances of oppression, despite the violence of nature and violence of man, the individual is free and is also free to choose. He can become better. By some transcendent means human beings can distinguish themselves from brute things. Thus man can choose dignity. Tommy Wilhelm can seize the day and choose dignity. Henderson moves from the cow-worshiping Arnewi to destroy his body and soul and becomes a lion and in the process he learns about the possibility of self-transformation. The salvation of the self, by choosing dignity, is an honoured behaviour.
Bellow shows a deep desire for the liberation of man from chains, whether imposed by society or by the mind. The protagonists meet with a strong sense of self, in fact the sacrifice of self demanded by social circumstance. From alienation they must travel to accommodation. Joseph in his state of freedom is functionless and unbearably isolated, but when by hurrying his draft call, he seeks accommodation and he sacrifices the freedom of the self. Joseph discovers: “what we really want is to stop living so exclusively and vainly for our own sake, impure and unknowing, turning inward and self fastened.”

(\textit{DM} 154) Asa Leventhal has to balance what he owes a man who is at once his persecutor, his victim, and also his companion in this universe against what he owes himself. He discovers that he has a moral obligation in each direction. For Augie March, it is a comic battle with several high adventures. In spite of the much running and adventures there is no possibility of freedom and finally he moves towards accommodation. Tommy Wilhelm is driven to the extreme. He can no longer run. He must find a principle of life in this world that has beaten him. He manages to get it in his last desperate adventure and finds himself weeping at the bier of a stranger and finds himself accepting existence with an act of love toward life. It is the progress of the soul that moves from isolation to affirmation of ordinary life in the world. This is made by Eugene Henderson with his “\textit{grun-to-molani}”, ‘man want-to live’ as whispered by the African queen. But Henderson is driven by lofty ambitions, he needs further adventures. Man wants to live, but how. His passion for service has to be chastened and trained. This he is able to do with the advice of King Dahfu. Herzog is able to confront and overcome his problem with the firmness and strength of his heart. Finally he is pragmatic enough to survive intellectually. Bellow makes Herzog live in a state of chaos and disorder. He is also made to long for love which leads to his realization of man’s capacity to leave the self and dissolve the self in brotherhood. His letter writing itself is to make him understand the value of love.
Mr. Sammler’s experience of death during the war in a mass grave reflects a need to restore religious faith and belief in God. Mr. Sammler’s experience of death teaches him to be sober and instills in him a desire for respecting the existence of others. Bellow lays emphasis on death in order to necessitate the religious belief in the nobility of man. The knowledge of death takes man beyond the influence of: “Maya, the veil of appearances that hangs on all human experience.” (MSP172) Freedom is the goal of their quest, but freedom forces upon them knowledge of the self, and self-knowledge discloses to them a world intelligible only in love. This in turn enables them to humble themselves before experience.

Each of the protagonists is forced like Augie, to suffer confusion between love and individual fate. Joseph is in a desperate attempt to reacquaint himself with ordinary communal reality. Asa Leventhal, a self-enclosed, self-righteous victim reaches a final understanding of what it is to be exactly human. Asa discovers that man is accountable in spite of many weaknesses and with that discovery he achieves a tentative goodness. Augie realizes that Thea’s love is murderous but it is a real love, a way of discovering other people. Tommy Wilhelm and Henderson also struggle to admit love to their freedom, to be themselves and at the same time to have a place in the human community. Tommy Wilhelm, at the end, seizes the day and moves towards the consummation of his heart’s ultimate need. With Henderson, this is achieved by a notion of heroic-transcendence based on freedom. Herzog’s journey of the mind also leads him to self-acceptance and not disintegration of the self. Artur Sammler has experienced the worst human atrocity in the history of western civilization. He has literally risen from the ashes of the Holocaust and now wanders the streets of New York City. He is appalled by the moral disintegration that he sees in the characters he encounters in the street and in the insensitivity of the members
of his own family. He has learned of the evil that human beings can inflict on each other and in his declining years he acts as reality instructor to the younger generation.

In all these novels, the protagonists are presented as fearing death but in the end there is the acceptance of death which transforms human life and enables the protagonists to find some meaning and significance in life. Man should be constantly aware of his impending death which is inevitable and should direct his actions accordingly so as to make his existence essential and meaningful. This has been possible, because these protagonists of Bellow are god-fearing people who have faith in the morality and virtue of humanity and they long to lead a life of happiness and eternity. As they live amidst corruption, hypocrisy, and snobbery of modern people, they are made to feel that the world they inhabit has lost its God, and its spirituality. They are persecuted, betrayed, cheated and humiliated by their fellowmen, as the planet that man inhabits is governed not by spirituality but by brutality. There is universal despair but Bellow’s men emphasize hope. They stand for the value of duty and understand the significance of spirituality. They strongly believe that the world is governed by a set of values that are positive and rewarding and they aspire for truth, order, harmony and love in this world. They firmly believe that these are not elusive but attainable. With their moral strength and belief in God, they are able to more towards transcendence and emerge as intellectual survivors. They believe that any individual’s survival is a mutual or a collective endeavour and that man cannot exist without the assistance of others. Above all the survivor is the one who retains his will to live, grun-to-molani. He is determined to keep alive in him the sources of compassion or else he would be less than human.

Bellow’s early novels Dangling Man and The Victim are gloomy but end with positive notes. The Adventures of Augie March presents a dazzling hero, a picaro who defends human possibilities by embracing hope. Seize the Day, Henderson the Rain King,
*Herzog* explore the nature of human freedom. All of these protagonists yearn to redeem themselves by finding beauty in life. By creating such individualistic characters, Bellow reveals that there is something extraordinary even in ordinary that makes redemption possible and through them he rejects the attitude that everyday life is trivial and ignoble. This redemption is possible only by the surrender of the self and this aspect is portrayed vividly in *Henderson the Rain King*. Driven by the relentless voice that cries: “I want, I want,” Henderson feels alienated. By fleeing civilization, to seek what he wants in Africa, he discovers the loving relationship that humans have with nature and with each other and surrenders his self by accepting responsibility for a lion cub and an orphan child which results in intellectual survival. The Bellow hero has to decide whether to conform to the pattern of existence that surrounds him, or to explore new possibilities. He may ultimately not discover what he seeks, but the search itself is significant.

Bellow has come to write in a hostile environment where everything leads to the belief that society gets degraded because of its materialistic pursuits. But he has a deep awareness and a hope that in spite of what man has landed himself in, he can emerge as an intellectual survivor. However pessimistic the condition of life seems, Bellow still asserts that we live in an organic universe where justice and purpose govern human actions. Bellow with his detachment from particular communities or ideologies sends the message of love to be passed on from one human being to another. Bellow’s creed is human, his faith is love, and his religion is peace: “It is an accident of fate, of birthplace, birth year, that made him a novelist instead of a sage.” (Kauffman91) Bellow’s writings epitomize the moral vision that is an integral part of the Jewish outlook. He believes in the divinity of the individual. Although a person may be physically or emotionally fragile, he is created in the image of God and is therefore majestic. Man is thus a mighty creator who has the ability to overcome obstacles that challenge and impede human endeavour. He is
also capable of determining his own destiny. Bellow believes in the worthiness of life which is God-given and one should enjoy the various experiences one encounters. This is a positive approach to existence and it is reflected in Bellow’s novels.

Joseph of *Dangling Man* uses the metaphor of the “craters of the spirit” to which all people are drawn: “to know what we are and what we are for, to know our purpose, to seek grace.” *(DM 154)* The protagonists of Bellow will come to know as does Joseph that there is no identity, no integrity, no better fate, no creation without a social commitment, without an understanding of one’s relationship to others. Bellow always infused his fiction with his humanistic values. He is always concerned about the protagonists’ reintegration with society, communion with other human beings and they are finally made to understand that life is worth living only in the company of others. They resolutely say that they believe in brotherhood and it is brotherhood that makes a man human. They fully comprehend the cause and consequences of their isolation from their fellows.

Bellow’s fiction is both intellectually demanding and imaginatively appealing, at the same time steadfastly affirms the value of the human soul. His novels have a universal significance and are liked by everyone as he treats in his works those problems of life that have made man’s survival difficult in contemporary America. Man is always oppressed with a fear whether the precious life is going to be wasted. Man has many plans and idealizations and the ultimate goal of man is his intellectual survival. Bellow’s novels also contain the essence of all religions. Seeking peace is the essence of all religions and *The Bhagavatam* says that the world is the body of God and that the soul dwells in all his creations. The *Koran* says that it is righteous conduct which is true religion. Bellow’s holistic view of man appeals to an Indian in a special way. Like the ancient Indian writers, Bellow explores in his works the possibilities of man’s survival with dignity. A true, sincere and deep study of Bellow’s novel will lead the readers towards harmony and
brotherhood. Then there will be no more struggles for power, no conquering of land, no racial discrimination, no more Jews or Christians, Hindus or Muslims, Sikhs or Buddhists. There will be only man, the noblest creation of God, the supreme creation of God. This is the true realization of the self and this realization will turn the earth into heaven. In Bellow’s view, the writers of the modern age have lost faith in man’s potentialities to prevail over a crisis. They therefore believe that man is condemned to live perennially as the victim of chaotic circumstances. Bellow affirms that we are not born to be condemned but to live, and also celebrate life. Bellow feels that artists must emphasize the fact that human qualities may appear suppressed in modern society but they still exist and the artist must also make a clear estimate of the human condition. The artist must act as the conscience of the community and try to restore through art the enchantment of life. Saul Bellow is quite averse to the deliberate denigration of human character as found in Adding Machine: “You’re a failure, zero, a failure. . . . A waste product. . . . The animal’s instinct but not his strength and will.” (Rice 61)

As an American Jewish writer of major significance Saul Bellow has taken the traditional role of the Jew in society and cast him into one of prominence. The Jew is no longer a schlemiel. He is a picaro, a writer, a professor, society’s commentator. As such he is a victim, but no longer a victim of the Gentile. He is now the victim to himself. However he remains the intellectual survivor par excellence. The principal characters in Bellow’s fiction have heroic potential, and many times they stand in contrast to the negative forces of society. God made man a complex creature with his virtues and his defects. To be human is to be flawed, weak and mortal. All must learn to accept the nature of their humanity. It is the central lesson from which all other knowledge will spring: “Nobody truly occupies a station in life any more. There are mostly people who feel that they occupy the place that belongs to another by right. There are displaced people
everywhere.” (HRK 34) Earl Rovit is of the opinion that these words spoken by Eugene Henderson could have been spoken by almost any of Bellow’s characters, rather by Bellow himself. Rovit finds that a major theme in Bellow’s fiction is how to cope with a sense of alienation and displacement with all human flaws. Bellow has often endowed his protagonist with intellectual awareness that invariably transforms him into a survivor from a victim and this gives his protagonist a universal significance.

Man always has a future to face, and the future generates in him anxiety and uncertainty. This, in turn, makes him aware of the inherent nothingness of human existence and the worthlessness of the world dependent on it. Each individual is thrown into a world he little understands and in which nothing but death is certain. Human beings exist and are free to choose and act. But the recognition that man is wholly responsible for himself and the world around him makes his freedom awful. They become misfit in the world they inhabit. They are alienated beings devoid of social interests. They live in the self-created world like uprooted beings. The world created by Saul Bellow differs from that of the typical existential writers. He does not dismiss man pessimistically, ignoring his potentiality. Instead emphasis is laid on the spiritual power of man which enables him to overcome solitude. He has immense love for human beings and is passionately concerned with his struggles, suffering and anguish. But he has faith in man’s call to great deeds, man’s capacity of transcending human limitations so as to lead a life of authenticity.

Novelists in Bellow’s time did not deal with the heroic characters exceptionally endowed with rare qualities, but with the ordinary, the common place, the weak and even the ignoble ones. Bellow, in his novels, tries to give a broader, more flexible, more coherent, more convincing, more comprehensive account of what a human being is. All his novels are struggles, in the in the midst of which there is a poor miserable creature trying to save himself from drowning. This constant struggle - physical, intellectual,
emotional, spiritual - is staged by his heroes which is more or less the struggle of all Americans. Bellow’s originality lies in the vision that in the terrorizing atmosphere of 20th century, man may seem to be nothing, but obviously he is something. Exactly what he is and what he can be and will be is a matter of his choice. In the most heroic of spirits, he accepts the challenges of life. When one becomes aware that alienation is a universal problem, that everybody is an outcast, one realizes that: “there is a larger body from which you can never be separated.” (STD 91) The delicate balance, between what a man owes to himself and what he owes to others, is demonstrated by each Bellow hero. If a man wants to be truly human which is a sign of dignity, he must accept the existence of evil and guilt in others as well as in himself. All the heroes of Bellow are tainted with a measure of evil, yet they amply show the possibilities of a noble and dignified way of leading life. Regardless of the circumstances, the individual can do more than lament his fate, at least can give a thought to his conscience and feel responsible to others. Bellow firmly believes that good returned for evil is the true solution, and this is a brave act that can be performed only by a few courageous persons and Bellow’s protagonists are undoubtedly brave. Modern man having exhausted this planet’s resources looks to the moon for a fresh start, but Bellow’s choice in still this sinful earth. Landing on moon may provide a sense of pride and gratification to the modern man but as far as the soul’s need is concerned, it is not advancement. Bellow senses the danger inherent in the western society and ridicules the idea of spiritual progress through material prosperity which is cherished by a number of his fellow citizens.

Every generation has a life style of its own in matters of behaviour, fashion, thought and ideas. This beautiful life endowed with all the noble qualities gets marooned in the brutish activities of the modern world. In spite of all the defects of the modern world, man ought to remain honourable, faithful to the law of nature and imbibe new
doctrines and judiciously mingle them with the old and valuable traditions of the yesteryears. The result will be surely a more vigorous and progressive human race. The man of the present day needs to have superior refinement and active disposition and he must be capable of identifying happiness with honour. An honourable and dignified life is a life that is well lived. It is a life in which compassion, sacrifice, pity, love, caring and sharing are valued and treasured. And there is also the need for a life of sacrifice which means to understand the feelings of others. It is time to start anew like the mythical bird that sprang to life from its ashes. Like the phoenix which rises from its ashes the Bellow hero is mysteriously reborn from the ashes of his disintegrated self to emerge as an intellectual survivor.

Bellow’s fiction reflects the American present and the cultural past. His unique style has helped him find a personal voice and rhythm adequate to express independently his sense of the openness, difficulty, joy and darkness of the contemporary life in the context of all of human existence. Bellow’s skilled use of language and the brilliance of his style have been highly commended. Bellow was a master, who could make intelligent and chiseled writing which was not felt like an imposition and burden on the reader but given as a gift. Bellow sprinkled his prose with allusions to literature, myth and history. Myth and history are made extraordinary in the hands of the story-teller. This feature of Bellow’s prose highlights the American dream itself. Realism was one of the determining characteristics of the writer. Bellow began as a realist, progressed in fantasy and ended as a comic novelist. However his basic concern is chiefly with emotional relationships, subtleties of life, psychology, and he displays these with a precise, delicate and unerring skill. No other American writer is an adept as Bellow at conveying the subtle emotional distinctions. Bellow’s technical skill is beyond comparison. Technical skill, however amazing it might be, is meaningless unless it conveys remarkable insights into human life
and experience. Therefore his technique required superior minds in his readers, as well as in his characters. Bellow has also used comedy in his novels. For Bellow, comedy restores balance, order and sanity. Bellow’s humour is of a more intellectual nature. It comes from the depth of his hero’s psyche in repeated rhythmic outbursts. As a humourist, Bellow’s dominant strength has been his powerful sense of the modern horrors and the frailty of man and with equal ease he is able to communicate this to his readers. *Dangling Man* written in the form of a journal, in the diary form is a realistic novel. The first person narrative draws the attention of the readers. *The Victim* and *Seize the Day* are third person narratives which broaden the perspective and at times the readers see things from the point of view of the protagonists. In *The Adventures of Augie March* and *Henderson the Rain King* Bellow moves on to a more expansive style and makes use of fantasy. In *Herzog* Bellow is led to the direction of comedy. But Bellow’s humour is of a more intellectual nature. Bellow also mixed autobiographical elements into his fiction and many of his principal characters were said to bear stark resemblance to their author. In America and also elsewhere, due to the feeling of displacement and loneliness, man led a frustrated life. To free man to some extent from this feeling of displacement, writers like Bellow took in their hands the device of humour in their novels. Bellow’s comic presentation has sometimes being labeled as Jewish humour. Jewish humour has the *schlemiel* as one of its central figures. The *schlemiel* is one whose luck is always bad. The Jews are people whose luck has very often been bad. In the face of disaster, the comic response was to shrug one’s shoulders and face it with elegance. So, Bellow used comic satire as a traditional means of restoration of one’s balance even in a state of despair. He has satirized manners, politics, literary circles, market place, business world, technology and ideas that led to self-deception. Bellow’s fiction abounds in satire as well.
The present thesis has tried to race social issues for the preservation and conservation of the self, irrespective of where he lives and in what condition he lives. It has been noticed with great grief and pain that capitalist societies are consumption hungry, caring for none. The outcome is that the modern man is alienated from himself, from his fellowmen and even from nature and he has been transformed almost into a commodity. The universe is no doubt pessimistic, egocentric, guilt ridden and circumscribed by a profound sense of limitation. Man struggles in the surrealistic world of pain, death and metaphysical anguish but it is also possible to preserve a romantic temperament. In this set up he tries to be close to others, whereas he is utterly alone, separate and estranged but endlessly trying for shelter within himself. It is quite natural for anyone to form an emotional attachment to such individuals across the world who have had to struggle for survival and finally when they emerge as intellectual survivors, one gets immense satisfaction. The knowledge that there is still goodness prevailing in this universe provides one with tranquil restoration. The other thrust of this study is to recreate the bond of humanitarianism, whereby one becomes more and more concerned with dignity, humanity and community. This work also analyses the novels of Saul Bellow and underscores his concern for the problems of the modern times and the power of man to alter the tide of circumstances. Man is nothing else, but what he makes of himself. Man is responsible for what he is. Everyone should be aware of what he is. When it is said that man is responsible for himself it really means that he is responsible for his own individuality and at the same time, he is responsible for all men. Man’s existence in the world depends upon his relations with others, and his freedom depends upon the freedom of others. This study also shows Bellow as a novelist deeply engaged in universal problems, worried about the destiny of humanity, a fact that places him among the major contemporary writers. The study concludes with the assumption that people living all
around the world deserve favorable prospects and they have a great desire to ameliorate their position. But sometimes indignity is heaped upon them due to invidious notions. However for every tragedy there are a thousand joys. For every setback, there are countless ways to move positively forward. Though the world may sometimes seem cold and dreary, there is always a bright new sunrise on the way. In the darkest of times hope shines brightly than ever. This thesis intends to provide the readers the proof that an individual should not be bereft of hope because he has the aplomb to cherish his dreams. As Hemingway said: “A man may be defeated but not destroyed.”