CHAPTER –III

INTELLECTUAL SURVIVAL THROUGH SPIRITUAL ENLIGHTENMENT

In its widest sense, spirituality refers to any religious or ethical value that is concretized as an attitude or spirit from which action flows. The concept of spirituality is not restricted only to religion and now-a-days the term is often used in a vaguely Gnostic sense in which it means the non-material aspect of things. Etymologically the word is derived from the Latin *Spiritus* which means breath or breath of life and its Greek equivalent is *Pneuma*. Spirituality is a subtle and sublime God-man relationship. It is the basic way of living in the world with God and with others. It involves a divine call and a human response. It is a communion without fusion, and an attempt to reflect the spirit of God even within the most resistant part of the temporal world. All the definitions and descriptions of spirituality have two points in common. First the insistence upon the primacy of God’s initiative in spiritual life and second, the complementary role of human response in devout life. Man cannot save himself, or he cannot on his own initiative fill the gap between man and God. God’s initiative and man’s response are complementary moves and aspects of spiritual life, yet primacy is given to God’s initiative and continued sustenance by His Grace. Man’s duty is to attune his body, mind and soul to accept God’s workings in him. Man’s active co-operation and disciplinary practices are needed to condition himself for receiving God’s Grace. God’s grace is not so easily received. Man has to repent in order to receive forgiveness, confess in order to obtain God’s mercy and accept the discipline as put forth to man by God in order to obtain the grace of God.

Religion must enhance the dignity of man and it must be a strong preventer of everything that diminishes the worth of man. Spirituality consists in man’s knowing, naming and loving God. Spiritual enlightenment consists in the actualization of man’s
potential for self-transcendence, which is effected with the assistance of God’s spirit. When man is overpowered by his weakness and false temptations in this materialistic world, spiritual assistance aids him in elevating himself. The human mind, in the present world is accustomed to the shadows of the material world and often it fails but when it catches sight of the dazzling light of God, the mind is enlightened. Matthew Fox believes that true spirituality deals with power, and it helps man to develop his power of creativity, justice and compassion. Its aim is to ground persons and communities in the powers that will enable them to survive in the midst of adversity.

Our thinking about spirituality . . . must include the dirtying of the hands, the stretching of the heart, the opening of the mystic inside, the practice of the “unself consciousness” . . . of the child or fool, the awakening of the right brain . . . the struggle for justice at many levels of society and its institutions. (Matthew16)

Spirituality consists in finding one’s lighted centre by piercing through the darkness around. There is divinity hidden in man, and one has to enkindle it and fan it into an active flame. A confluence of God’s grace and man’s endeavor is the balanced approach to spiritual enlightenment. This implies whole-hearted commitment to living and growing as fully as possible in intimate relationship with God. This intimate man-God relationship is:

. . . eminently dynamic rather than static, concrete rather than abstract, practical rather than theoretical, intuitive rather than speculative, existential rather than essential . . . personal rather than impersonal, communal rather than individualistic. (Warren14)

In a confused society, a society without norms and purpose one succumbs to temptations under the threats of insecurity, anxiety and fear. The only solution to these problems of life is to have faith in God and religion, beyond the logic of science and reason. We find the
twentieth century man experiencing alienation from society, from his fellow beings and also from his own self, painfully aware of the fact that: “life runs out of one’s hand like sand and that one will die without having lived; that one lives in the midst of plenty and joyless.” (Fromm 86)

Saul Bellow’s concern is to redeem the individual. He is concerned with the fate of the self. His quest is to find out the answer to “What is man?” The question has moral implications not by reference to any given ethical code or religion and it cannot be resolved as such, through strained arguments. According to him, modern writers have answered this question poorly and Bellow’s endeavor is to show the emergence of his protagonists as intellectual survivors through ethical means and also to a large extent by spiritual enlightenment. The Bellow hero is engaged in a quest for fulfillment which is spiritual, in terms of a striving for freedom and knowledge of the self in relation to the lives of other human beings. Saul Bellow had been brought up as an Orthodox Jew, and he had a proper respect for God as the ultimate power. He was brought up in a deeply Jewish spirit with the knowledge of the Yiddish language, the life-thread of a cultural and religious tradition in Eastern Europe. Bellow has time and again warned us against putting him in the category of Jewish writers, and on several occasions, he contemptuously rejected the Jewish label applied to him. Jewish cultural heritage manifests itself in his works in a subtle and refined way. His fiction is based on some traditional beliefs as against the post modernist fiction. His novels explore spiritual dissociation and the possibilities of human awakening through transcendence and spirituality. He is a novelist who rejects the orthodoxy of modernism and speaks in favour of intellectual survival through spiritual enlightenment.

Spiritual enlightenment is, for Bellow, affirmation of brotherhood through the redemption of self by destroying ego. The protagonists Tommy Wilhelm, Henderson,
Herzog affirm brotherhood by submitting their will to the will of God. Commenting on their faith in God, it is said “When the world bears down heavily, Bellow’s heroes are not reluctant to turn to God.” (Siegel 133) Henderson prays to God to save King Dahfu’s life and Herzog’s last letter is addressed to God. It is a very thought provoking scene in which Henderson is found praying to God. “Take care of the king. Show him Thy mercy.” (HRK 307) Henderson has faith in God. It is human nature to remember and pray to God during the time of adversity. With his prayer, Henderson surrenders his will to God. At this moment of revelation, he understands the divine order of things - that the thunder and storm of life constantly assail man so as to plunge him of his vanity, illusion and to subdue him, but not to negate his faith in existence. It is this faith in God that redeems Bellow’s hero of his miseries and directs him towards a life of joy and fear. Countering despair with hope, disillusionment with faith, pessimism with optimism, and the apocalyptic temper with the prophetic in his novels, Bellow believes that man is in the image of God. His heroes struggle to destroy ego so as to achieve high conduct – to have compassion, to reach others with love and to seek peace - and this is the essence of all religions. Bellow is able to present his protagonists as reaching others with love and care because Bellow believes that man “is created in the image of God.” (Kumar 762)

The importance of religious faith in the attainment of selfhood is not to be overlooked. Henderson’s successful movement from alienation to identity and his transformation from an unaccomodated man to accommodated is no doubt a proof of man’s potentialities to overcome the fear of nothingness which he does by clinging on to God. Though Joseph in Dangling Man and Asa Leventhal in The Victim accept reality and affirm life, they still fail to achieve complete self-realization because their religious faith is not realized. A happy and peaceful life is possible when there is a complete surrender of one’s will to God. As Christ said to his disciple “For whosoever will save his life shall
lose it, and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.” (Matthew 16:25).

Tommy Wilhelm in *Seize the Day*, let down by his family and friends turns to God:

> Let me out of my trouble. Let me out of my thoughts, and let me do something better with myself. For all the time I have wasted I am sorry. Let me out of this clutch and into a different life. For I am all balled up. Have mercy. (*STD* 26)

The Bellow hero is able to join others to share the sorrows and joys through spirituality. Therefore, though there is alienation in Bellow’s fiction, there is no acceptance of it - there is an affirmation of humanity, brotherhood and love through faith in God. Through spiritual enlightenment, his heroes struggle to destroy ego so as to achieve high conduct - to have compassion, to reach others with love and to seek peace – and this is the essence of all religions- Hinduism, Christianity, Islam or Judaism.

The Bellow protagonist, who is slowly questing for the truly human condition, who is desirous of getting answers to fundamental questions about life and death, finds himself compelled to modify his view of human nature. He has to abandon the profane and reach out to the sacred. Herzog believes that it is possible for mankind “to live in an inspired condition, to know truth, to be free, to love another, to consummate existence, to abide with death in clarity of consciousness.” (*Herzog* 165) Mr.Sammler, the protagonist of *Mr. Sammler’s Planet* feels that man has bestial qualities but accepts that the crazy species called mankind has managed to overcome its criminality by spirituality. He is able to acknowledge the truth that there is in the heart of every human being a splash of god’s own spirit. Eugene Henderson goes to Africa, the original home of mankind, seeking a cure for sick humanity. King Dahfu who has read William James’ psychology which states that, “man is the most ruthlessly ferocious of beasts,” (*James* 717) reconciles Henderson by stating that there is the animal in man and further tells him the Blakean truth about
human imagination that it is the source of all human accomplishment, an endowment that can sustain, alter and redeem mankind.

Bellow protagonists are born with an intuitive knowledge of the soul which they forget but which their ordeals force them to remember. Augie March recovers the thrilling axial lines that had passed through his soul when he was a kid. In Arnewi, Henderson seeks the pink light that had soothed his five-year old soul in America, and he senses that he: “might find things here which were of old, which I saw when I was still innocent and have longed for ever since, for all my life - and without which I could not make it.” (HRK 102) Light in Bellow’s fiction, is a metaphor for the soul. In To Jerusalem and Back, Bellow refers to the filtering and purifying powers of the light of Jerusalem: “I don’t forbid myself the reflection that light may be the outer garment of God.” (Jerusalem and Back 93) Bellow also uses the metaphor of a persistent voice that cries out from the very depths of one’s being. In Seize the Day Tommy Wilhelm listens to the promptings that arise from his soul telling him about the real business of life. Likewise Henderson is driven to Africa by a voice that tortures him with its insistent demand, “I want, I want, I want,” (HRK 12) but which will not tell him what he wants. Moses Herzog too is plagued by a voice within, one that demands order.

In Dangling Man, Bellow presents the most defenseless protagonist who has a faint inkling that he should not seek the true human condition by himself for himself, but should discover it “in the company of other men, attended by love.” (DM 92) The protagonist of The Victim, Asa Leventhal is aware that love exists but he does not trust its power. In The Adventures of Augie March, Augie March believes in the axial lines and comes to a conclusion that love can oppose the negative forces of maya. Mankind originally noble and good now inhabits a fallen world and has to seek the home - world it has lost through love and spirituality. This is a materialistic and nihilistic world, a supersensible world. At
the same time this is a spiritual world which is invisible, but it can be sensed by those who are half-blind. Queen Willatale and Mr. Sammler look inward into themselves to discover it with their damaged eyes. Bellow always senses the existence of this mysterious world and says that we receive spiritual guidance of which we are unaware. Like Wordsworth and Browning, Bellow also believes in a spiritual life after death and that mortal earthly life is only a preparation for spiritual life. In the Salmagundi interview Bellow claims: “We think that we are mortal and that we have only one life; we’ve given up all belief in an afterlife, and our time has become more valuable because of this.” (Bellow11)

Joseph, the protagonist of Dangling Man is a would be writer and an intellectual caught waiting for the draft, who romantically believes that intellectual and spiritual enlightenment are to be attained by isolating himself within the confines of a room in a cheap Chicago boarding house while he studies the great writers of the Enlightenment. The novel also reflects the 1940s preoccupation of American intellectuals with French existentialism and individual freedom, of the meaning of moral responsibility, of death and of social contract. The novel which is in the diary form depicts the troubles and tension of the troubled mind of the protagonist. Joseph’s journal gives an account of his social, intellectual and spiritual experience, as he dangles between the ordered world of work which he has quit and the army that he is about to join. In his entry in the journal for 17th December, Joseph writes about his impression of Chicago landscape from the window of his room. He can find no beauty in the scene and is forced to conclude that its barrenness is a reflection of the human spirit that created it. He says:

There could be no doubt that these billboards, streets, trucks, houses, Ugly and blind, were related to interior life. There were human lives organized around these ways and houses, and that they, the houses, say, were the analogue, that 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, a difference between things and persons and even between acts and persons. Otherwise the people who lived there were actually a reflection of the things they lived among. (DM 24-25)

Joseph is in search for identity, grace and spiritual enlightenment.

To divorce oneself from the world is wrong because the world is full of wonder. The question that man must confront with himself is: “How should a good man live?”(39)

To others good is only abstract but for Joseph, or any Bellow hero good is not abstract. It is related with spirituality. This “good” has a spiritual meaning which motivates one’s whole life. The answer of course is that goodness can only be achieved in the company of men, not by isolating oneself in a room or in a drunken stupor, or by going off on a safari to Africa as Henderson does. Man’s principle must be to have a sense of responsibility for his humanity, and at the same time maintain his own dignity and his freedom. Joseph, the dangling man is in an interim situation and is conscious of this situation and seems to be waiting for a kind of a Godot that is answerable to his imagination and his dignity.

Joseph’s basic feeling is one of displacement. He is fully aware of the symptoms of his malaise but not its cause. Like Henderson in Henderson the Rain King, who hears a voice within him which keeps saying: “I want, I want, I want” Joseph also is not sure of what he wants. He is not clear about the nature of his desire. However, it is clear that what he wants is equilibrium. The answer that can be given to Joseph for his question: “How should a good man live?” is that a good man should live in harmony with his fellow beings and maintain his equilibrium. This is the enlightenment that a sensible man can attain. Later, Joseph gives an alternative version: “We are all drawn towards the same craters of the spirit - to know what we are and what we are for, to know our purpose, to seek grace.” (154) This is indeed spiritual enlightenment that Joseph is capable of attaining and to a
large extent attains by the end of the novel. The dangling Joseph is what he is, but being so
he is not content because he has not reached the limit or because he has reached it and now
wants the other joy, to be better than himself. He insists that the search for value will be
conducted without the benefit of God, or clergy or persuasion outside himself. In a
splendid scene in *Dangling Man*, Joseph listens to a piece of music that speaks to him of
man and God as the universal source:

> Its sober notes, preliminaries to a thoughtful confession, showed me that I
was still an apprentice in suffering and humiliation. . . . And was I to
become this whole man alone, without aid? . . . In what quarter should I
look for help, where was the power? . . . The music named only one source,
the universal one, God. (67-68)

Joseph wants victory to be won with his own bare hands and not by any special grace.
The dangling man seeks salvation within his own being and from his own resources.

Joseph’s idea regarding his inability to accept his freedom is part of his
misconception of how one should face the world in order to find himself. When Joseph
attempts to test his inner beliefs against the reality that he finds in this world, he becomes
not only physically alienated but also psychologically isolated from the world. Even in a
state of total rejection of the world, he tries to make a satisfactory relationship with his
brother Amos, but Joseph is unsuccessful in his attempt to communicate with his brother.
He begins to feel the strong impact of his isolation, and he resigns himself to a philosophy
of suffering. Joseph believes that through humiliation and suffering he may become a
whole man. He begins to accept his isolated position but soon he rejects it. He realizes that
he is not strong enough to become an isolated man. At times when he feels helpless, he
thinks that help should come from “the universal one, God.”(68) Joseph’s isolated
situation enhances his feeling of insignificance, and his sense of meaninglessness makes
his life become a loathsome burden. He even calls his isolated world as: “ideal
construction” (140) and he realizes that he does not have the ability to bridge the gap
between his ideal and reality. In isolation, Joseph loses all sense of the importance of
external phenomena, and he cannot realize that communication with the world would help
him to establish meaning in his life. The more he looks himself up in his own
consciousness, the more he realizes the futility of such an exclusion and narrow search.
The realization that his introverted search is not effective does not change Joseph’s life,
because he cannot understand that the development of individual identity must be
understood in a world in its full dimensions.

Joseph isolates himself physically, emotionally and mentally within the confines of
his room and turns his freedom into prison. To be totally unattached and uncommitted is
an imprisonment. Real freedom consists in the ability to choose that which one prefers to
do. Freedom is relative. One is free from something, or free to do something. One has
freedom of thought and freedom of movement but suspension and stasis is not freedom.
Man does not and cannot exist in a vacuum. As Joseph says man is part of the world,
whether he likes it or not: “Whatever you do, you cannot dismiss it.” (137) It may be no
accident that Bellow named his protagonist after the biblical Joseph, for, like him,
Bellow’s Joseph finds himself in exile, although his exile is self-imposed. Bellow must
have thought that this helps in a way to think deeply and get spiritual enlightenment. A
comparison between the two Josephs is drawn: “Joseph, isolated from his brethren like his
biblical counterpart, has no world. Similarly, the novel exists in no real world, only a
peripheral one, limited by Joseph’s abortive contacts outside himself.”(Baumbach39)
Because Joseph has isolated himself from the rest of the world, Bellow probes the reality
of Joseph’s mind more deeply than that of the world in which he lives. Bellow also
underlines Joseph’s incomplete identity by withdrawing from the reader, knowledge of
Jacob’s last name. Without a surname, Joseph stands as a representative of modern alienated man.

Joseph’s conversation with his alter-ego, the Spirit of Alternatives is suggestive of Joseph’s gradual acceptance of reality which is again a sign of his spiritual enlightenment. The dialogue between Joseph and *Tu As Raison Aussi*, the Spirit of Alternatives offers Joseph a way to unfold a vision in which he learns to face painful truths about himself by projecting them on to his alter ego. The Spirit of Alternatives argues that to gain a measure of truth about himself, Joseph must shed his old romantic self, the self that blames others for his failures and misfortunes and who reads himself and others through a framework of unrealistic expectations. He must accept the world as it is and find himself as part of it, no matter how despicable the world may appear. This is a great step in his education, for only by accepting both the truth inside him and the reality around him can he learn what it means to be human. Joseph also understands that man is aggressive by nature but at the same time there is a mixture of gentleness in him. Joseph can detect in his own heart gentleness although there are occasional outbursts of violence. His ambition is to found a Utopian colony where spite and cruelty would be forbidden. Joseph is in search of an alternative set of values with which he can confront this modern age.

Emerging with the hunger to establish an ideal community of love, Joseph finds himself in a squalid jungle where selfishness, rapacity, and spite range at large: withdrawing to preserve the integrity of the self, he finds himself in a prison which damages his sense of reality and devalues his life through stagnation. In spending himself he wasted himself; saving himself he is now losing himself. Jungle or prison. Or the war. Such is his problem; such is his choice. Such is his freedom. (Tanner 21-22)
If the world is inherently destructive and evil, only transcendence is an answer. Joseph has many visions that suggest transcendence. He often uses religious images, as in his description of mankind as “the feeble-minded children of angels,” (137) or in his description of his house as “the hospital of a religious order.” (142)

The most important reality that Joseph confronts is that every human must face and accept the truth of his own mortality. To be fully human Joseph must face the inevitability of his own death. Until he does that, he cannot become part of humanity. Death hovers over the novel and the knowledge of death and acceptance of death is one of the greatest sources of spiritual enlightenment. The atmosphere is suffused by the lingering death of Joseph’s landlady Mrs. Kiefer. Early in the novel Joseph learns of the violent, unexpected death of his friend Jeff Forman who had dreams of becoming a war hero. Then there is the unexpected death of a man in the street. Joseph stops to aid him, loosening him of his collar to allow him to breathe more easily. This reminds him of his mother’s death and the loss he felt then. Then there is the Christian Science woman who stands on street corners disseminating the literature of her faith. She tells Joseph that faith in the Christian doctrine will save him from death in the war. But her own death belies her words. The deaths he witnesses in the novel prepare him for the possibility of his own death.

The approach of death is not purely negative. First, the metaphorical death is partly the death of the old self - of the egocentric individual who must die before Joseph can become human. Second, it is representative of the physical death Joseph must face. By approaching death, Joseph can be reconciled to humanity. (Clayton118-119)

For Joseph, at the end, it becomes necessary that he should break down, die to his old self before he can be born anew. He puts an end to his agony by joining the army and stops the process of dissolution. He hopes for the rejuvenation of the spirit. The spiritual
enlightenment is also seen when finally Joseph is ready for an orderly and systematic life. His spiritual preparation for war is an indication that he does not choose self-demotion, but looks forward for survival and war is an important incident in his emerging as an intellectual survivor.

The problem that Asa Leventhal, the protagonist of *The Victim*, faces is precisely the same as the widespread crisis that threatens man today. Uprooted from his racial bearings and unsure of his religious faith, the individual can no longer derive meaning from a social structure that is indifferent to him and that which suppresses human values. In a world in which the idea of “who runs things” is uncertain, the only course left to man is to come to terms with one another, to accept his particular destiny within the general framework of human destiny, to feel for the plight of those who have been less fortunate in life and to become conscious of the sense of profound responsibility that the interdependence of freedom confers upon them. Man’s responsibility to man extends even to the unintended results of his actions. Every action he takes must be weighed by its possible effect on others. This is reinforced by the first epigraph. The second epigraph again stresses the communality of human beings, as well as their helplessness in the face of forces they cannot understand or control. During the course of the novel an innocent child dies and a man questions the trials he must face alone. And in the end one is left with the question, “What’s your idea of who runs things?” Although one can gain self-knowledge, Bellow suggests, one cannot necessarily gain knowledge of the greater mysteries of life. The novel traces the protagonist’s emotional and psychological convergence with his alter-ego. The novel moves, then, from divergence to convergence.

Saul Bellow sets the story of *The Victim* metaphorically in claustrophobic New York to remind the reader of the psychological condition of his protagonist Asa Leventhal, Leventhal “seems to live on Matthew Arnold’s ‘darkling plain, swept with confused
alarms . . . where ignorant armies clash by night’. ” (Dutton 35) Like Joseph of Dangling Man, Asa is also living in a world of chaos and he finds his life becoming more serious and troublesome with the intrusion of Allbee. Asa is placed in a series of crucial encounters with Allbee and the confrontation of the two is an external projection of Asa’s divided personality. Asa undergoes psychological and moral changes in these encounters and finally through a kind of spiritual enlightenment emerges as an intellectual survivor with a better understanding of himself and his relations with other human beings. The understanding that he receives at the end is spiritual and this becomes possible after he undergoes various stages of anxiety, despair and dread. The theme of Coleridge’s Ancient Mariner can be applied to The Victim. The mariner destroys the universal order by killing the albatross. He has to undergo severe penance for this act. His suffering increases his spiritual awareness, and when he blesses the crawling, slimy creatures of the sea, his penance is lifted and the order is restored. In The Victim, Asa Leventhal’s losing his temper with Rudigar has similar consequences. It leads to Allbee losing his job. Asa restores the order he disrupted when he understands Allbee and accepts some of his values. By accepting suffering, he recognizes the sufferings of others.

Asa Leventhal is a good husband, a good uncle, a good brother, a good worker even in trying circumstances. He is not a troublemaker. He is even an enlightened person. He wants to be part of the mainstream American society. He has a social conscience too. Then the question that arises is what more can be demanded of him. He is required to be everything. The supports for our neat, well-ordered lives can crumble at any minute. Inhuman demands can be made without any warning and these demands can come from the strangest quarters. It will be quite natural to resist and like Asa one might ask “Why me?” (TV 70) Various hints in the novel lead to associate The Victim with the Old Testament and myth of Job. For example, there’s Allbee’s allusion to the Book of Job.
Allbee’s nature also makes him comparable to Satan, who, with the acquiescence of God, persecutes Job. Leventhal realizes that he has become a prey of oppression, he asks in perplexity, “Why pick on me?” (71) Leventhal’s questions seem to have come from Job, who being unable to bear his bitterness and sick of living, demands of God the reasons for his sufferings. Leventhal’s catastrophe is of course incomparable to Job’s. Like Job he believes that he suffers without a cause. Northrop Frye calls this victim the *pharmakos* or scapegoat. He writes:

The *pharmakos* is neither innocent nor guilty. He is innocent in the sense that what happens to him is far greater than anything he has done provokes, like the mountaineer whose shout brings down an avalanche. He is guilty in the sense that he is a member of a guilty society, or living in a world when such injustices are an inescapable part of existence. (Frye 41)

If one wants to be saved and if one has no choice, one must drop everything and follow one’s fate. And this religious message is put in the mouth of a repulsive anti-Semite and this is the great message that makes Asa Leventhal spiritually enlightened. However Leventhal is not presented as a particularly attractive or admirable character. He is large and heavy and his physical heaviness reflects an intellectual and spiritual clumsiness. He possesses an intelligence, that does not understand its own powers, as if preferring not to be bothered by them, indifferent and this indifference appeared to be extended to others. This indifference however is on account of turmoil of fears. Leventhal feels guilty that it is due to him that Allbee loses his job, and feels that in some way he deserves to be persecuted. He seems to accept the blame that the anti-Semite imposes upon the Jew. On one level, the book is about the ambiguous relationship between the Jew and the non-Jew in society.
Asa Leventhal cannot clearly understand himself through his spiritual and philosophical conflicts. Asa’s reluctance to accept Allbee shows that his inner conflict is not yet over. His deep and honest feelings of responsibility, his sense of the real and the ideal, and his empathy for his fellowmen, give him the dignity of development and the possibility of change. Asa Leventhal in *The Victim* whose name in Hebrew means ‘healer’ cannot heal himself, until he realizes that no definition of the self is complete unless it embraces other people. He knows that an individual’s worth is determined by the other fellow’s estimation of it. One’s worth is decided not by him but by others. Leventhal rejects Allbee at the beginning simply because he is unable to share the fate of Allbee. He thinks at one point: “The peculiar thing struck him that everything in nature was bounded; trees, dogs and ants didn’t grow beyond a certain size. ‘But we’, he thought, ‘we go in all directions without any limit.’” (17) Man’s aspiration is limitless, man is not. At last, Leventhal recognizes his own increasing awareness of what is going on about him by seeing the elements of his life not as incidents with little connections but as pointers towards a specific meaning.

The death and re-birth motif has been dramatized again and again in Leventhal’s crossing the Staten Island where his brother Max’s family live. The ferry ride is a mythic voyage to the land of the dead which finds its symbolism in Mickey, Leventhal’s dying nephew. When Leventhal is called upon to help Max’s family and take Staten Island ferry for the first time, Bellow gives an almost naturalistic account of the things and people Leventhal sees along his trip:

The rain had gone out to the horizon, a dark band far overreaching the faint marks of the shore. On the water the air was cooler, but on the Staten Island side the great tarnished green sheds were sweltering, the acres of cement widely spattered with sunlight. The disembarking crowd spread through
them, going toward the line of buses that waited at the curb with threshing motors, in a shimmer of fumes. (4)

In another crossing, when he is supposed to take Mickey to the hospital, Leventhal, riding on the ferry, catches sight of a hellish scene which Porter associates with O’Neill’s Yank of *The Hairy Ape*:

> A tanker, seabound, went across the ferry’s course and Leventhal stared after it, picturing the engine room, it was terrible, he imagined, on a day like this, the men nearly naked in the shaft alley as the huge thing rolled in a sweat of oil, the engines laboring. (44)

The scene is a “modern Inferno.” (Porter 50) On his return to Manhattan after hospitalizing Mickey, Leventhal witnesses another scene which again leads to associate it with the underworld and the damned: “The ferry crawled in the heat and blackness of the harbor. The mass of passengers on the open deck was still, like a crowd of souls, each concentrating on its destination.” (56) This scene, along with others, brings one back to the second epigraph of *The Victim* which Bellow quotes from De Quincy’s *The Pains of Opium*:

> . . . now it was that upon the rocking waters of the ocean the human face began to reveal itself; the sea appeared paved with innumerable faces, upturned to the heavens; faces, imploring, wrathful, despairing; faces that surged upward by thousands, by myriads, by generations . . . *(TV Epigraph)*

The epigraph is Bellow’s reminder to his readers that New York City, where *The Victim* is set, “with its teeming millions, is imbued with the quality of De Quincey’s opium dream.” (Schlazer18) The voyage, which Leventhal undertakes again and again, tends to intensify his constant fear, but on the other hand, it also evinces his effort to face his own reality, his fear. Only by doing so, he may have a chance to be rejuvenated. The joining of Leventhal
is symbolic of a plunge into the depths to gain knowledge and power over self and destiny. As the story proceeds Leventhal becomes more and more compassionate and understanding.

The death and rebirth motif is also dramatized in the attempted suicide of Allbee. If the suicide had worked out successfully, it may have killed Leventhal also. Therefore, be it a suicide or murder, it is evident that Allbee’s attempt involves a symbolic death on the one hand, but on the other hand, the act also symbolizes an act of redemption, and the redemption ultimately paves the road to the salvation of both men. The escape from death is symbolic of rebirth. After this encounter with Allbee and after turning off the gas and opening the front room window to get enough fresh air, Leventhal goes to sleep. “He would sleep undisturbed, he cared about nothing else.” (255) This sleep proclaims his symbolic rebirth after which one finds him a spiritually enlightened man. The suicide attempt of Allbee is the symbolic death which frees Asa Leventhal from his alter-ego, and allows him a re-birth into a new awareness of his participation in the suffering of others. Allbee also preaches a lesson that Leventhal ought to be able to understand despite being a Jew, namely that one must repent and become new men. Allbee further says to Leventhal: “I’m giving you a chance to be fair, Leventhal, and to do what’s right. “(207) Allbee disappears from Leventhal’s life. Years pass and gradually Leventhal sheds his guilty feeling.

The theme of the humble acceptance of oneself is repeated again and again in the novel. Harkavy tells Asa of a girl who found fault with him and of his words: “All I can say is, ‘Lady, God bless you, we all have our faults and are what we are. I have to take myself as I am or push off I am all I have in this world. And with my short comings my life is precious to me.’” (78) Asa’s brother Max also echoes the same self-acceptance. When Asa attacks Max for his absence from home, he admits his fault and speaking of the
death of his son he says: “…we must have made mistakes, too. But what can you do? It’s not like with God, you know, in the Bible, where he blows his breath into Adam or whoever.” (217). If a man cannot accept the darkness in him he cannot be human. Asa becomes aware that man is not flawless and in humility he must take responsibility for even what he, like the merchant in the epigraph, is hardly responsible. Asa seeks the experience of human fraternity and sense of love for others and these assume the form of a sense of contact with a larger spiritual being that we are all part of. In the novel there are scenes where there are large numbers of people forming great circles. This is suggestive of Asa’s responsibility for others and it is derived from the concept of spiritual unity between himself and others. Leventhal’s momentary acceptance of his relationship with other people redeems him from his complex and fear of insecurity.

At the end of the novel, after several years, when Asa Leventhal meets Allbee in an overcrowded Broadway theatre, he faces Allbee on equal terms without any sense of insecurity. He no longer sees Allbee as a persecutor. Both have changed. Allbee is happy somewhat successful but essentially the same. Asa is externally the same but essentially changed, owing to a recognition of his human status which in itself is spiritual enlightenment. Leventhal is convinced that man is the master of his own fate, where as Allbee believes that men are victims of circumstances. Leventhal seems finally to have accepted the fact that he is both Jew and American. Like all Americans, his identity is a combination of inheritance and acquisition. In their last encounter Allbee notices Mary’s pregnancy and remarks, “Congratulations, I see you are following orders. “Increase and Multiply”.” (262). The intimation is of course that Leventhal is under orders and follows the God of Old Testament, and Allbee presumably does not. But Leventhal is now able to accept the remark as a pleasant remark rather than a malicious scorn. Leventhal has learned several lessons in the course of his experiences which enable him to emerge as an
intellectual survivor. He has gained the self-knowledge he needs to lead a productive and satisfying life. He has experienced a kind of re-birth. His hopes for the future are concrete and meaningful.

*The Adventures of Augie March* has the American society as the background in which the protagonist is seen as the innocent man who grows in a society which is changing faster than he can adopt. *The Adventures of Augie March* is the story of an American who has failed in the mass culture of that society and in which his brother Simon benefited materialistically but lost in terms of feeling and metaphysical enterprise. The major theme of the novel is to overcome obstacles and the individual’s struggle with society to finally emerge as an intellectual survivor. In the novel, Augie March, the protagonist begins his trip by fleeing outward, often in acts of rebellion against the mainstream society. He makes a variety of outward journeys and finally returns home, an enlightened man. The novel depicts the pre-World War II Chicago life among the Jewish immigrants struggling to find excitement, pleasure and love in a hostile world. Augie explores each new possibility life offers but always tries to maintain his life-affirming attitude in a society where the pursuit of money and the denial of feeling are the accepted values. Augie is prepared to face any consequences in his quest for freedom. The different jobs that he takes are only the ways that he gets to know more of life’s experiences.

Augie’s career is a series of confrontations with a kind of Machiavellians such as Einhorn, Simon, Mrs. Renling, Thea, Mintouchian, Basteshaw. They are amongst the many who try to influence him. Augie is tired of these personalities. He himself is an idealist, motivated by love with the concept that he has a higher individual fate. Augie’s rejection of these Machiavellian influences and clinging instead to the idea of love is an expression of his hoping to reach what he feels sure will be his fate. There is something pure about his character. It may be this spirit of idealism, or it may be his transcendental faith in love
which finds little encouragement in this world. The question raised in the end is whether or not this kind of purity can survive in the face of the Machiavellian forces that permeate the novel.

Like Joseph of *Dangling Man*, Augie wishes to believe that he has a separate destiny, or a special fate. He believes in his own particular distinction and this is implied in his name: August, meaning exalted. At one point, in the novel, Augie characterizes himself as being democratic in temperament. In Augie, Bellow depicts the hero of rebellion, one who will not be deprived of his individuality. What appeals to the readers is his enthusiasm, his high spoken ideals concerning man’s potentialities, his general acceptance of all living things. Though he lacks commitment, these are also symptoms of enlightenment. Augie accepts all people and experiences. Augie realizes ultimately that evil is timeless and universal and has no particular connection with the present age on any other. By being disillusioned with people and environment, Augie undertakes a quest to find out truth by himself in the various parts of the country. From a small circle, he gradually moves to a larger one. When he joins Joe Garman in an illicit running of immigrants over the border from Canada, he sees various aspects of human misery. The long procession of the strikers on the road is the visual picture of economic imbalance of the post-Depression Era. As he enters Erie, Pennyslvania he experiences a universal darkness. This darkness is symbolic of the spiritual and moral bankruptcy of the world.

Bellow uses exotic names like “Calcutta midnight” and “Vesuvius of Chaos” to indicate how far Augie is removed from his familiar background and how closer he is to the universal condition of mankind. Augie’s journey to Mexico is simply the result of his disappointing experiences in America and is rooted in an impulse to escape. There is no spiritual urgency in his undertakings. He, of course, gains some spiritual insights in the course of his adventures but they are only accidental by-products of his adventures. *The*
Adventures of Augie March does not limit its action to one particular place. Augie describes himself as: “an American, Chicago born.” (AAM 3) and describes his upbringing in Chicago. Very soon, he moves into wider circles of experience which take him to New York, Mexico, Paris and other places. The change of settings contributes significantly to the shaping of Augie’s consciousness and character. However the change he is seeking is not in his environment but in himself. He is on the lookout for some inner order, some spiritual enlightenment by which he may define his life.

Society as a whole appears to Augie as a bewildering profusion of fiction, making him complain, “Almost everybody I ever knew wanted to show in some way how he held the world together.” (456) In Augie’s socio-cultural environment, acquiring knowledge is a difficult and bitter experience that destroys his natural enthusiasm for learning. Texts and their interpretations seem to him to represent the reverse of communication. He says: “…clouds, birds, cattle in the water, things, stayed at their distance, and there was no need to herd, account for, hold them in the head, but it was enough to be among them. (330).

Here he looks with his original eyes. What he yearns for is to bring the world close together, to unite the soul and the mind. Augie negotiates a partial arrangement with society. He takes part in the war and miraculously survives a shipwreck. He also becomes a businessman. He becomes more like everyone else. He is capable of adapting. He refers to: “the animal ridens in me, the laughing creature, forever rising up.” (536). This discovery gives what Augie had longed for, the precious sense of communion with his fellow being. This realization infuses Augie with the energy to overcome certitude and the fear of failure. Like the other heroes of Bellow, Augie broods over his past mistakes. He sees that he had used Stella to protect himself from Thea. He now feels that his commitment to “possibility” had been no commitment at all. This insight gives Augie an inner life and a substantial identity. Augie also gets a glimpse of his transcendent reality-
one which he realizes has changed his life and which speaks for the celebration of life.

Augie has discovered: “the axial lines of life, with respect to which you must be straight or else your existence is merely clownery, hiding tragedy.” (454) Augie is hopeful about his regeneration and if he can remain true to these axial lines, he will have the strength to get what he seeks.

Even his pains will be joy if they are true, even his helplessness will not take away his power, even wandering will not take him away from himself, even the big social jokes and hoaxes need not make him ridiculous, even disappointment after disappointment need not take away his love.(455)

Augie simply refuses to see the world as a valley of despair, in spite of the wounds and scars that struck him. He is always surrounded by greedy and cynical people but he does not despair. His main conflict is with himself. He demonstrates his freedom by committing petty crimes but he respects the main body of law. Reading always enlightened him. He says he can never stop reading, even though he knows nothing will come out of it. He says:

Why, I knew there were things that would never, because they could never, come of my reading. But this knowledge was not so different from the remote but ever-present death that sits in the corner of the loving bed room; though it doesn’t budge from the corner, you wouldn’t stop your loving. Then neither would I stop my reading I sat and read. I had no eye, ear or interest for anything else. . . . Why everybody knows this triumphant life can only be periodic. (194)

Augie is certainly a sympathetic character. He has abilities and qualities which are necessary for integrity, nobility and intellect. He is a keen observer with a clear vision. He
also has the ability to see the good in people. One has admiration for Augie due to his generous acceptance of people for what they are. Augie is an unconditional humanitarian and accepts people and feels for people in spite of their shortcomings. Though Joe Garman, the thief with whom he was involved over a stolen car lies to him, he feels for him when he is beaten in the police car. He sees all the others - his Grandma Lausch, his mother, his brother Simon, the rebellious Minna, the Renlings who wish to adopt him, Thea his sweet heart, Bateshaw, the ship’s carpenter and the rest – in the same perspective. He accepts them, he knows what they are and what they want and he is sympathetic towards them. He has the ability to lose himself in others.

In spite of his not so good fortune, Augie knows that his ideals are right. When he views himself as a Columbus, Bellow bestows an illumination, on Augie, enlightenment upon his protagonist. Seeking the axial lines that elude him, Augie discovers that only in stillness, not in striving can he recapture the transcendence he seeks. The axial lines regenerate him and fill him with joy. A strong feeling of love erases his fear of the chaos of the world around him and his inability to control his destiny. One critic says of Augie’s relationship to the axial lines:

If Augie keeps his bearings through all the conflicting realities that people like to impose on him, it is because he is in touch with the ‘axial lines of life’ an intuitive knowledge expressed in . . . Traditional abstractions-

‘Truth, love, bounty, usefulness, harmony.’ (Fuchs 80)

Augie is not only an optimist but also a humanist. Brotherhood and love come easier to Augie than to Asa Leventhal. Bellow illustrates this with a dream. While in the life boat with Basteshaw, Augie dreams that in the city he comes across an old woman panhandler. She manages to get some coins from him, and then offers to treat him to a beer. He declines but is touched by her kindness and compassion: “In kindness, I touched
her on the crown of her old head and a great thrill passed through me from it. ‘Why, old woman,’ I said, ‘you’ve got the hair of an angel?’ ‘Why shouldn’t I have,’ she said gently ‘like other daughters of men’.” (507) By extending the hand of brotherhood toward her, Augie experiences what he often calls a ‘shared fate’ and discovers in her humanity a transcendent humanity. In truth, Augie has educated himself through his adventures. It has been more accepting of himself, maintained his integrity, gained a valuable sense of reality and at last made a serious commitment to marriage. From the experiences of his life, from his failures, he learns that he cannot humanize the world to suit his vision. Porter describes the crucial lesson Augie has learned: “Instead of a worthwhile fate, what Augie discovers is a worthwhile attitude with which to deal with fate: a persistent optimism strengthened by laughter, the animal ridens in him.” (Porter 186) Augie has learned to cope with an uncaring world and a society whose major characteristics are disorder and unresolved contradiction. This world does not promote the practical realization of his hopes and dreams. His search for a transcendental experience, the crossing of the axial lines, the spiritual enlightenment, substitute for this failed vision and enable him to emerge as an intellectual survivor.

In Seize the Day, Saul Bellow brings to light the Judeo-Christian paradox, which preaches salvation through deprivation, triumph by way of defeat and transcendence by means of descent from ego. Tommy Wilhelm’s loss of wife, children, home, job, social status, self-respect, father and fortune constitute the circumstances against which the hero must realize his humanity. Tommy Wilhelm realizes that entry into brotherhood is the result of one’s willingness to share the human burden of shame and suffering. Bellow resists modernist pessimism through Tommy Wilhelm by lifting him above the barriers of loneliness and alienation which only exist on the surface of life. Tommy discovers that through compassion and charitable acceptance of human life, through spiritual
enlightenment, he can emerge as an intellectual survivor. The chaos is only external; beneath this chaos there lies the region of the human and the divine which confer peace and harmony. What Tommy has to do is cease social striving and simply surrender to the human and the divine that makes man a whole entity. He discovers that within each person lives: “a real soul that says plain and understandable things to everyone.” (STD 84) This kind of a spiritual enlightenment makes him declare that: “truth for everybody may be found, and confusion is only temporary.” (84). Hence when he understands the truth of life, Tommy resists pessimism and finally rises above discord, loneliness, defeat and despair.

It is only when Tommy Wilhelm is deprived of all social blessings including the blessings of his father that Tommy comes into his spiritual inheritance. Though his heart beats fast upon seeing the corpse of the man, symbolically his own age, he also noted that the experience is rich. He reaches a strange point within human religious experience which Bellow calls: “the source of all human tears.” (117) Tommy Wilhelm will survive his present condition of distress and pessimism: “by way willy nilly of falling into blessedness.” (Scott 127) Through Tommy Wilhelm, Bellow attempts to renew the universal connections which men have with each other. In this world, all human experience is related to suffering and humiliation. Bellow makes his protagonist undergo this suffering to a very high degree in order to demonstrate the great saving Judeo-Christian paradox that the outcome of suffering can be logically love and accommodation, hope and affirmation.

*Seize the Day* is a unique novel of Bellow, as it is his only work which attempts to explore the relationship between father and son against the back drop of the Jewish-American family. As an assimilated Jew, Tommy has unclear Jewish values. For example, family is important to him, yet he breaks away from his family ties. First he quits school
against his parents’ expectations, to go to Hollywood, secondly he seeks to divorce his wife and marry a Catholic friend. The discord in the family is heightened by the fact that both father and son are at crucial stages of their lives. The father is an octogenarian, facing the end of his days, while the son is middle aged trying to gain some significance and some material gains in life. On this day of reckoning, he even loses his last seven hundred dollars by trusting Dr. Tamkin. However, instead of still considering himself a victim, Tommy needs to accept the defeat, and achieve reconciliation for possible redemption.

The novel not only pits father against son but also the world of business against the world of the spirit. Human misery in general is either the result of being in a condition of life that is intolerable or being trapped within a self that creates its own hell. In the modern world the various social agencies level at alleviating the former, the psychiatrist the latter. One is in need of both the social agency and the psychiatrist as one can see and experience the depth of misery prevailing in this world. Essentially this is Wilhelm’s state. He is a born loser. However the conditions of his life are not those that would appeal to the sympathy of a social worker. He is no doubt jobless, homeless and penniless but these are self-created problems. He is a character who is both unwilling to take responsibility for his own actions and too quick to transfer the blame on others. On this final day when he is drowned in his own misery, he goes “deeper than sorrow” and out of this figurative death his soul is born. This was a kind of pilgrimage and the suffering was necessary so that the soul is re-born with a new status and Tommy is seen inclined towards spirituality. Earlier in the novel, at certain moments, he is seen pursuing the good, his self-loathing falls away and he even feels within himself the power of a Saviour. The sense of universal spirit that unites and blesses all mankind has recently come to him as he is walking through a dark tunnel beneath Times Square.
Man’s soul has existence only when it can love and feel love in return. Modern society, however, has no use for the soul. People have lost their spirituality and kill or be killed is the law of material life. Most people conform to this and they are not even aware that their souls have died in this process. Those who get spiritual enlightenment realize the value of the real soul. This is what finally happens to Wilhelm who discards the pretender soul and realizes the value of the real soul. Only a man who is inclined towards spirituality is capable of doing this. This is the reason one is able to sympathize with Tommy, even when he is in the wrong, even when he is the slob. The readers are continually witnessing the struggles of a drowning man and they want to see him rescued. Down on his luck and down on himself, Wilhelm proves to have a special gift, a real gift, for feeling. He has the capacity to feel from the heart, to feel intensely, generously, even selflessly and this quality is not a trifling matter. It is this gift for feeling that prevents him from taking the right decisions, which lead him to a life of despair. Beneath this sense of despair is the birth of Wilhelm’s soul that ultimately does not accept defeat. One of the most moving accounts of the conditions under which Wilhelm can hope to be victorious is given by Bellow. Tommy gets a spiritual enlightenment when he understands that “the pretender soul” has died and his real soul” has been born. Wilhelm may not have emerged triumphantly out of his troubles, but the very sufferings they cause him have brought his soul into being.

Bellow has used the image of drowning to bring in the real effect. The novel opens with Tommy’s coming down in an elevator from the second floor of the Hotel Gloriana in New York City to meet his father: “The elevator sank and sank. Then the smooth door opened and the great dark red uneven carpet that covered the lobby billowed toward Wilhelm’s feet.” (STD 3) Wilhelm is here imagined as already drowned. As the world progresses, Wilhelm is found drowning amid a society that is already dead in its soul.
Apparently Tommy Wilhelm quotes several lines from Milton’s Lycidas: “Sunk though he be beneath the wat’ry floor” Bellow gives the impression that Wilhelm is always swimming for his life and he is quite unsuccessful. Wilhelm is also short of breath as he smokes too much, drinks too many coca-colas, takes too many pills whenever he is emotionally stirred and feels depressed. Bellow makes the readers imagine a man swimming for life, of a man slowly drowning. At one point, Tommy struggles for air in a telephone booth. He shouts to his wife: “You’ve got to let up. I feel I’m about to burst.” His face had expanded. He struck a blow upon the tin and the wood and nails of the wall of the booth. He says: “You’ve got to let me breathe.” (114) He had scarcely enough air in his lungs to speak in a whisper. Tommy feels suffocated even by living in the city.

The quest for money and the cynicism of the business world oppress him both physically and mentally. However, he is not a complete victim of circumstances. Clearly he is his own worst enemy. Only Professor Tamkin offers to help him but he is Wilhelm’s destroyer as well. Tamkin most ruthlessly makes Tommy a prey but Bellow uses Professor Tamkin to state many of the truths in the novel. Tommy whose greatest need is to live positively turns to Tamkin as a potential saviour. It is Tamkin who encourages Tommy to trust his emotions. It is he who makes Tommy to understand the difference between the “real” and “the pretender soul”. He sees Tommy as affected by “sick humanity” and offers to heal him. However, it is very clear that Tamkin is a cunning man who uses others for his own benefits. The day in question is significant as it is a holy day. It is the eve of Yom Kippur. The month is September and as old Rappofort, an acquaintance, reminds Wilhelm of this day and asks him whether he has reserved his seat in a synagogue for Yom Kippur. Yom Kippur is the Day of Atonement for the Jews, when one makes formal acknowledgement for one’s sins. Yiskor, which falls on Yom Kippur is the service at which one remembers and prays for the dead. “Well, you better hurry up if you expect to say
Yiskor for your parents,” (86) old Rappofort tells Tommy. Tommy does not attend the synagogue, nor does his father, who has no religion. Tommy Wilhelm’s mother was an observant Jew but for Tommy Jewishness does not seem to matter much. His girl friend Olive is a Catholic, not a Jew. The day is significant as the same day he allows Tamkin to let their combined investment ride to its loss. Wilhelm finds that he has lost all his money and has allowed himself to be cheated by Tamkin. Yet it is Bellow’s genius that renders this character as both a Saviour and a destroyer. It is again Tamkin who preaches to Tommy, the basic doctrine of Romanticism that an affinity with nature can bring in goodness and harmony. Like Wordsworth, Tamkin speaks of the mystic quality of nature, of the power of nature to elevate and sustain man. Wilhelm derives spiritual enlightenment by knowledge of this basic doctrine of Romanticism. Tamkin tells Wilhelm:

If you have confidence in nature you would not have to fear. It would keep you up. Creative is nature. Rapid. Lavish. Inspirational. It shapes leaves. It rolls the waters of the earth. Man is the chief of this. All creations are his first inheritance. You don’t know what you’ve got within you. A person either creates or destroys. There is no neutrality . . . (77)

Here Tamkin is a Saviour, but when he makes Wilhelm lose all his money by asking him to seize the day he turns out to be a destroyer. But ironically we see Tamkin as a Saviour because ultimately Tommy Wilhelm comes to understand the death of the self in a scene in the funeral parlour. In the Jewish funeral home he accepts his Jewish heritage and his human heritage as well. On the surface Tommy Wilhelm’s shedding tears would seem to be an ignominious condition, but man has the power to choose dignity to overcome his ignominy and live in harmony at least within himself.

The moment before the coffin is an expression of Wilhelm’s true soul, his love for all men, his acknowledgement of their common humanity. The corpse represents his
father, himself, Dr. Tamkin, it is only a stranger: “another human creature.” What dawns on Tommy’ mind is not just the acceptance of death or his status as a victim but love for the true soul within himself. The passage preceding the funeral supports this interpretation. He sees:

. . . the great, great crowd . . . in every face the refinement of one particular motive or essence – I labor, I spend, I strive, I design, I love, I cling, I uphold, I give away, I envy, I long, I score, I die, I hide, I want.

Faster, much faster than any man could make the tally.”(115)

The man’s corpse represents the death of his false soul and the possibility of a new life. “The confrontation of one’s own death is always, in Bellow’s novels, the beginning of a new life within an admission of one’s humanity.”(Clayton 134) Thus the drowning at the end is a hint of new life for Wilhelm’s true soul, an image of spiritual hope. If the final breakdown of Wilhelm signifies despair, it more emphatically signifies hope. It affirms the beauty and dignity of Tommy Wilhelm through spiritual enlightenment.

Many critics, including Daniel Fuchs and John Jacob Clayton, have analyzed the influence and psychoanalytic thought in Wilhelm’s character. Bellow views Tommy Wilhelm as a moral masochist who intentionally goes against the family because he has not been given any kind of importance within the family and there is a desperate need for respect that he feels he has never received. It is the same psychoanalytic thought that again pervades Wilhelm’s relationship with Dr. Tamkin, the semi-literal psychologist who is both Wilhelm’s destroyer as well as his Saviour. Although he is responsible for Tommy’s loss in the stock-market, it is again he who leads Wilhelm to distinguish between the “imposter soul” which is his socially contrived self and his real soul. This awareness is responsible for Tommy’s final spiritual enlightenment. This knowledge has given him the redeeming power. A confrontation of the self has saved Tommy in a fragmented society.
He is purged of hopelessness and he can go forward with hope and determination in this world: “Seize the Day is an affirmation of human life. Tommy is a representative man, an Everyman. To heal Tommy is to indicate the possibilities for healing the human race, to affirm the greatness of man.” (Clayton 135) Bellow proposes that man can be great, that even Tommy the common man who sees himself as a hippopotamus can be great. He only needs to open his eyes. He has to strive for spiritual enlightenment.

It is a noteworthy aspect that Bellow, who is a defender of the individual, says that redemption is possible only by discarding individuality. Bellow here looks for a new kind of individuality, one free from pride and falsehood. This is a spiritual condition. Bellow is fiercely individualistic, yet his fiction shows that redemption is possible only through a loss of individuality. As Clayton says the only way to remove the burden of the self is to remove the self. Bellow sees elimination of selfhood as the way to spiritual enlightenment and the redemption of the individual.

Seize the Day is described in terms of spiritual struggle between the real and one pretender soul. Bellow’s hero is a Christ-figure, a contemplative man on whom a religious solution is imposed. In the novel, Tommy Wilhelm’s humiliating defeat is a triumph because he is finally to go of the world. Bellow feels that the present human misery is indeed a spiritual agony caused by the estrangement of the individual from his innermost self. Tommy Wilhelm may be pathetic or heroic. It is possible to read Seize the Day, as counter-pointing death and despair with spiritual and intellectual survival. Seize the Day does not end with Tommy’s acceptance of his role as a victim. It ends in hope for a new life. Death is said to be a gateway, even if it is the death of the pretender soul because this leads to a spiritual rebirth and a better life.

In Henderson the Rain King, the protagonist’s quest has a strong spiritual thrust from the very beginning. Henderson the protagonist, like Augie is disillusioned with his
environment, but his reason to go to Africa is not just to escape the restricted constrictions of his surroundings, but learn the virtues of life, to find a spiritual remedy for his spiritual malady and seek humanity in the midst of primitive simplicity and finally emerge as an intellectual survivor. Henderson’s story is one of renewal, resurrection and spiritual enlightenment. His journey to Africa is a symbolic entry into the underworld. His entry into the Dark Continent is a psychological journey to the past, to the pre-human past. Henderson returns with better spiritual understanding. He returns from his African trip to civilization with a remarkable change of outlook which may be said as spiritual enlightenment. Invested with deep human significance Henderson has become sensitive to human suffering and pain. He recognizes in himself the need for something higher, the need for spiritual nourishment. He has been wandering aimlessly in a spiritual wasteland. He would now surely fight against the negative tendencies in his society and spread the message of “Grun-tu-molani.”

Henderson’s quest is to know reality and he explains his purpose behind the African trip. He tells King Dahfu: “My purpose was to see essentials, only essentials, nothing but essentials and to guard against hallucinations. Things are not what they seem anyway.” (HRK 291-292) Like the transcendentalists, Henderson also believes in the invisible world of spirits which constitutes a higher reality. Bellow, through King Dahfu conveys his belief in the immortality of the human spirit. Henderson’s belief in the immortality of the soul is a typical transcendental idea that the corporal and the visible are projections of the spiritual and invisible order of things. Henderson is first shown in conflict with himself and society. His life in a society of material excesses leads to depression, rage and finally to the conclusion that he is not fit to live among people. He seems to hate both society and himself for not being able to oppose it by becoming better. He perceives himself to be a failure, understands that his behaviour is irrational and
unacceptable but is unable to put effort to change it to the better. At this stage of his life, he has no inner strength to resist the negative influence of his life. His unnecessary arguments with his second wife Lily, alienation from his children, fight with his tenant, raising pigs for pleasure, causing annoyance to his family and neighbours prove him to be a spiritual impotent. He suffers from a poverty of the soul, due to lack of spirituality. The society in which Henderson lives cannot satisfy his spiritual needs.

The death of Miss Lenox, his maid is a momentous event that suddenly illuminates his past, present and future. Henderson perceives that he is on the verge of his personal degradation which is his spiritual downfall. This is a turning point in his life. It is a characteristic feature of Bellow’s heroes to affirm love over death. Therefore, he leaves for Africa to find a remedy for his situation, to: “burst the spirit’s sleep.” (77). He wants to leave certain things behind until all the bad is burned out of him. Henderson is longing to perform a selfless and pure thing that can wipe away the tears and grief of Arnewi people. The home-made bomb does not give the desired result but ends in a disaster and Henderson is overcome with frustration. He says: “I wish it had gone off in my hands and blown me to smashes. . . . This was how I left in disgrace and humiliation having demolished both their water and their hopes. (111-112). Robert Dutton offers a good insight into the reasons of Henderson’s failure saying that technological and scientific achievement persuades man to do God like activities whereas man does not possess God like abilities. Man has misapprehensions of his limited potentialities which in spite of his good intention make him destroy the value of life itself.

In the Wariri camp, Henderson undergoes two tests of his personality and learns lessons of life. First, he succeeds in lifting Mummah, the goddess of rain and becomes Sungo the Rain King. He gains victory here because he relies on himself and trusts his own strength and power to do this: “My spirit was awake and it welcomed life anew. . . .
Life anew! I was still alive and kicking and I had the old “grun-tu-molani.” (193) Bellow makes a comparison between Henderson’s failure with the Arnewi and his success with the Wariri. In the case of lifting Mummah, Henderson relies only on his strength and not on technology. The spirit’s sleep is awakened by the individual’s own resources. The motif of resurrection is strongly built and Henderson is the agent of resurrection, the true symbol of Faith. Henderson has philosophical discussions with King Dahfu, the King of the Wariri and now Henderson’s “guru,” concerning man and his destiny. King Dahfu says that a human being is his own creator and he can change the world by changing himself, by improving himself which is never too late. A brave man will not blame the world for his bad lot as Henderson has always been doing. He must eliminate the fear from his heart which rules mankind. For this, Henderson is required to befriend the lioness Atti and achieve her fearlessness. To befriend the lioness, Henderson has to learn to act like the lion, and absorb it into himself. When the fear of the lioness subsides, he will be able to admire her beauty. Man’s phobias deprive him of his ability to see and enjoy the world’s beauty. Even learning to stand on four legs like the lion will enable him to become one with the environment: the sky, the sun, the leaves and feel oneness with them. Roaring like the lion will release his negative emotions and teach him to relax. This is an existential illumination, a spiritual enlightenment for Henderson.

The nobility of Henderson’s instinct is greater than his fear. He comes face to face with the things he has always avoided. So, in spite of his terror, he is able to throw himself on the lion, and bind it in an attempt to save his friend Dahfu. Knowledge of death and the witnessing of death make Henderson face the harshness of life. Many a time, coming close to death, Henderson tries to run away. The more he thinks of escaping death, the more he learns about death, spirituality and the immortality of the soul. Henderson learns about immortality by evincing: “both his love for Dahfu and love’s power to transfigure
reality.” (Pifer 38) The elements of spiritual regeneration can be found here, when Henderson is locked in the tomb in which the body of Dahfu is laid and there is a moment of identification with his dead friend. Henderson’s burial and resurrection are symbolic. He rises from the grave carrying the lion cub that supposedly contains the spirit of Dahfu. This makes it clear that Henderson is capable of undergoing spirituality. The death of King Dahfu brings about a spiritual transformation which makes him feel with dignity, the responsibility towards his family. This is how he becomes an intellectual survivor through spiritual enlightenment. He finally offers his soul in prayer to an unknown God.

Henderson has faith in God. It is human nature to remember and pray to God during the time of adversity. He prays:

Oh you . . . Something, you Something because of whom there is Nothing. Help me to do Thy will. Take off my stupid sins. Untrammel me. Heavenly Father, open my dumb heart and for Christ’s sake preserve me from unreal things. Oh, Thou who tookest me from pigs, let me not be killed over lions. And forgive my crimes and nonsense and let me return to Lily and the kids.

(253)

He also starts feeling kindness and love. Only when an individual becomes aware of his spirituality and develops his potential, he can achieve harmony with himself. He can start appreciating his own life and the life of others. A happy human being can fill the world with happiness.

Like Emerson and Whitman, Henderson and King Dahfu advocate an organic view of life and express faith in the unity of the physical and the spiritual, body and soul, reason and emotion, self and society, death and immortality. To retain the inherent equilibrium and wholeness of life, it is necessary for the individual to express faith in the union of the physical and the spiritual. The Henderson the Rain King, Henderson, Dahfu, Willatale,
Itelo are depicted as physically big characters, and they are also noble and spiritually gifted people. Henderson is physically big, six feet four inches tall but due to his absurd nature and failure to fulfill his spiritual capacity, he is provided with a physical deformity. His face looks like the “Grand Central” and his body is like an “odd ball.” In contrast Dahfu is provided with: “well developed athletic body.” This is because he has succeeded in exercising his soul appropriately. Emphasizing his own deficiency and the successful life of Dahfu, Henderson says at the first meeting: “He seemed all ease, and I all limitation. He was extended, floating; I was contracted and cramped. . . . Yes, he was soaring like a spirit while I sank like a stone, and from my fatigued eyes I could not help looking at him grudgingly.”(160) This statement focuses on the spiritual superiority of Dahfu and he is used as a foil to Henderson.

The relationship of Dahfu and Henderson is comparable to the relationship of Krishna and Arjun in the Bhagavad Gita. Krishna conducted Arjun to his spiritual destination. Similarly Dahfu acts as the moral and spiritual Saviour of Henderson. It is under the guidance of Dahfu that Henderson restores his spiritual consciousness and becomes a whole person. Like Emerson they also believe that although man is mortal and physically subject to death, in spirit he is immortal and independent of death. Henderson says to Romilayu: “I wouldn’t agree to the death of my soul.” (277) Henderson even tries to reach his dead parents by playing on a violin inherited from his dead father. He believes that although physically dead, his parents are still alive spiritually and are therefore capable of listening to him and his music. Henderson’s act of carrying the lion cub from Africa to America and naming it after his dead friend Dahfu, also provides testimony to a similar faith. He tells Romilayu: “The king would want me to take it along. . . . Look, he’s got to survive in some form.”(326) This is indeed a confession of Henderson’s ultimate faith in the soul’s immortality. Further Henderson realizes necessity of social life. It is
very clear that Henderson wants to restore his connection with society, as well as his link with the self. Henderson realizes that it is his soul that connects him to society through its invisible links. Like Henderson, his mentor Dahfu also believes in individualism and society, self and society, reason and emotion. Like their spiritual precursors, they celebrate human emotions, feelings and love and yet stress the importance of intellect, reason and thought. They endorse love that is balanced by thought.

Henderson’s journey to Africa is really a symbolic search into his soul. His decision to go to Africa is out of a need to escape from his constricting self and also from the burden of material things which weigh down upon him. He receives a flash of insight when he sees the dead Miss. Lenox surrounded by heaps of useless objects that she has collected all her life time. He thinks:

Why do we allow ourselves? What are we doing? The last little room of dirt is waiting. Without windows. So for God’s sake make a move Henderson, put forth effort. You, too, will die of this pestilence. Death will annihilate you and nothing will remain, and there will be nothing left but junk. (40)

The junk that he sees at Miss. Lenox’ house is also symbolic of Henderson’s own spiritual condition. The contemporary western society is a spiritual desert, a vision that found its apt expression in the poetry of T.S. Eliot’s *Waste Land*. This has led to the American myth of escape among the 20th century writers but Bellow’s Henderson returns from Africa spiritually enlightened with an affirmative note - to make the world a better place to live in.

In Arnewi, Henderson feels trapped in a society that can sustain him materially but not spiritually. His journey to Africa is in search of spirit and wisdom. His ultimate goal is like that of a spiritual explorer. He is undoubtedly raised to mystical heights when he lifts Mummah in the Wariri camp which is a triumph and satisfying moment for Henderson.
His approach with the Wariri is different from his dealings with the Arnewi problem. With the Wariri he fulfills the necessary condition to calm and please the Gods: “He had lost the affection of the Arnewi by violating their religious beliefs, but he achieved community among the Wariri by acting within the context of their ritual.” (Opdahl 130) The death of King Dahfu makes Henderson realize that his self has so far been in a spiritual coma from which he has to recover. He was in a state of mystical darkness and the way to exit from this spiritual slumber is death, knowledge of death. He now feels that this state of spiritual slumber has ended and he has been elevated to the level of an intellectual survivor with his spirituality.

*Herzog* was a huge success because Bellow presented his readers with a contemporary male character who is tender, gentle, sensitive, excitable, and vulnerable but by the end of the novel is an intellectual survivor by means of spiritual enlightenment. Herzog, the protagonist finds modern life degrading with its acceptance of materialism and victimhood. He left his stable marriage with first wife Daisy because he found it dull and alienating but ended up in a marriage that leaves him isolated. He spends most of his time fretting about what he isn’t - a good husband, a good father, an academic success and he defines himself in these terms, rather than accepting himself in terms of the positive facts about himself. At the end of the novel, there is a transformation. He is found to attain mental equilibrium through spirituality. In an age of spiritual exhaustion, Herzog comes to learn that the soul’s deepest wisdom, still finds its expression in the oldest and the most permanent of Jewish dreams that belief in God always ennobles a man’s conduct.

At the beginning of the novel, Herzog is in a disordered state. Herzog, the scholar is super sensitive, a great sufferer who thinks he has been unfairly betrayed by those he has loved. Deceived by his best friend, divorced from his wife, harassed by his lawyer, forced to live away from his daughter, weighed down by his own chaos, he is really in a
bad shape. There is considerable gap between what he wants to be and what he is now. Like Henderson, he views the chaos of his personal life as a matter of misplacement, and like Henderson, he sets out on an exploration to find out the meaning of his existence. While Henderson undertakes a physical journey, Herzog’s wanderings take place within himself. In his mental and spiritual turmoil he writes letters which are never sent. All these thoughts about his past, about his marriages, his other relationships, his concerns about history and contemporary civilization are exposed in these letters. The novel’s real action is Herzog’s frenzied re-examination of his total experience, his attempt to give order and meaning to his life. This Jewish intellectual, uprooted and spiritually dislocated in the chaos of contemporary American materialism becomes for Bellow an instrument for measuring the decay of love and spirituality in the modern world. Like his creator, Herzog dislikes nihilism, and finds it threatening and dangerous. He attempts to balance himself in a world that is becoming more and more brutal. Moses Herzog observes that he lives in society that values brutality and scoffs at sentiment and spirituality. He also senses a profound moral decay in the world around him. The great irony of the novel is that he cannot decide how to solve the problems of social and spiritual decay except to talk about it to himself or to others through letters. In his letter to Shapiro, Moses expresses his dissatisfaction with the cultural and religious pessimism that surrounds him. Herzog tells Shapiro that he can’t accept the “foolish dreariness” and “the Wasteland outlook, the cheap mental stimulants of Alienation” (Herzog 75)

*Herzog* is a complex novel and its complexity can be attributed to Herzog’s state of mind. He is emotionally imbalanced as he is obsessed with his past life. Through his confused reminiscences the novel moves through places like New York, Chicago, and Europe till he goes back to the beginning - his country home. Herzog moves from one place to another physically and at the same time he also moves from turmoil and agitation
to a state of certitude and composure, from a state of verbalization to a state of non-verbal awareness. His letters are not intended for posting but are written as he is overcome by the need to explain, to justify and to clarify. His scribbling is involuntary, as if he is in somebody’s grip. This is only a self-devised strategy to find some kind of relief, some kind of release from a psychological stress. His letters reveal to the readers his intellectual bent of mind that can reflect on any subject under the sun - religion, politics, society, personal suffering. His letters are an intellectual play and a brilliant critical analysis of the problems and values of the society: “This is not a novel about Man; it is a man’s novel built up painstakingly and harmoniously from detail, character and situation.”(Reed 187)

Herzog describes America as a ‘fat Country’, a large, fortunate and powerful entity that should assume the responsibilities that come with such power. Moses Herzog feels a great need to communicate his message to the world. He is a genius who cannot let the world go. Herzog’s work is to correct people. His dream is to develop a Utopia. Yet, at the end of the novel, Herzog lets go of his desire to change the world, at least for the time being. His compulsion to write letters begins to fade. He retreats to the green of his Ludyville, where he makes a world of his own - a world of hope, optimism, renewal, spiritual enlightenment and peace. Moses Herzog, the post modern sufferer is also a survivor who knows that you have to fight for your life. When Moses reaches his country house in Ludeyville, he is attracted by the beauty of the place and exclaims: “~ here I am, Hineni! (310) Herzog’s “Hineni” echoes the “Hineni” of the biblical Moses, who called out “Here I am” (Exodus 2:4) in response to God who appeared to him in Exodus as a burning bush, telling Moses to go to Pharaoh and demand the liberation of the Hebrews from Egypt’s bondage. The biblical Moses is a leader, a liberator, a teacher of God’s laws. The protagonist of Herzog identifies himself with the biblical Moses and lays down the law in his letters. He attempts to correct the society. He writes letters and connects his
future readers as well. In the book of Exodus, God gave the Israelites the law through Moses, his messenger. Jesus was sent by God to redeem man from sin and death. Moses Herzog offers new lessons of optimism to save man from the pessimism of the present day. Herzog’s message is an affirmative one, Jewish but universal in concern and thought.

It can be said that Moses moves from sickness to convalescence, then to recovery and finally survival. He sees this period of life, his second divorce, as a period of recuperation, a gradual return to health after illness. He admits that his suffering has educated him. He has learned to make his pain the source of his strength. Moses agrees with Nietzsche that deep pain makes one noble. He learns the importance of bearing his pain rather than allowing it to weaken or destroy him. Bellow suggests through Herzog that deep pain can sometimes lead to nobility. Herzog views himself as a survivor of an ordeal. He writes to Shapiro: “We are survivors, in this age. . . . To realize that you are a survivor is a shock.”(75) After going through a state of despair and existential anguish, Herzog finally succeeds in rekindling his consciousness which enables him to gain a momentary glimpse into transcendent reality. A series of overwhelming experiences make him understand the vanity of his outlook and he learns to accept that life is essentially holy. He also accepts that God is not a concept but the only reality. He acknowledges the supreme power and glory of this “incomprehensible” power, and moves towards rehabilitation in this world where earlier he had remained as an outsider. He has finally achieved harmony, peace and stability. He has moved steadily from excitement to serenity, from pandemonium to pastoral bliss, if not paradise. He is able to solve his problem by moving through existentialism to transcendentalism. He understands the futility of seeking answers to the ultimate question of life through intellect. He derives the answer to the ultimate question regarding the significance of life. He gets the answer within himself and understands the mystery and meaning of human life. He is spiritually enlightened and he
experiences a communion with God, nature and his fellow human beings. Bellow, through the protagonist, shows that human spirit has its own communion with the eternal. Herzog’s openness to the beauty of nature reminds one of the transcendentalists like Thoreau, Emerson and others. In his adoration of nature there is also an acknowledgement of God’s omnipotence.

In Herzog Saul Bellow illuminates the social tension between sentiment and brutality in order to establish his analysis of suffering as a Christian value. Bellow presents Moses Herzog as a vulnerable, sentimental character, a man of feeling in the midst of a crisis who is forced to come to terms with the brutal truth about himself and his life. Moses writes, “creative suffering ….is at the core of Christian belief.” (219-20) Moses discovers that creative suffering has been at the core of his own behavior, but he is also worried that making suffering one’s livelihood will lead to the downfall of civilization. Bellow’s Herzog critically analyses the Christian emphasis on optimism and individual choice. Herzog sees Christianity as death-worshipping and Judaism as life affirming. Herzog is a man of feeling and Bellow illustrates this tension between sentiment and brutality through Herzog and through Herzog’s letters. In his letter, Moses speaks of his concern regarding morality, brutality and social injustice. The gospel that Herzog offers is salvation through a return to the compassion of the human heart. Moses Herzog is: “a prophet more than he is a character.” (Klein 54) Herzog is a prophetic book. At the same time, it is a novel about betrayal. Moses has been betrayed by his wife Madeleine and his best friend Valentine Gersbach. He has been intellectually betrayed by the society that surrounds him. He must recover from this suffering and all the same he must cure the world of its ills or what he sees as its ills.

Moses Herzog critically analyses not only suffering as a Christian value, but the Western Christian culture that has made the society materialistic and has deprived the
society of redemption. Christianity empowered people because it gave meaning to the suffering in their lives. It offered them a better world to look forward to. In doing that, it curtailed their drive to make the present world a better place, because the focus was on the life after death. The earthly world came to be viewed as evil and man was required to suffer so that life hereafter would be a life of happiness. Nihilism prevailed and as such this world suggests chaos, brutality without remorse or punishment. It is this chaos that Herzog fears, that Bellow fears. Bellow proposes that Western culture must move beyond its pessimism, to a more optimistic outlook. Bellow’s disillusionment, however, also extends to Romanticism in general. In an interview Bellow has said that the Romantic thought in the 20th century has advocated nihilism and that since there is evil in this world it must be destroyed.

Herzog inherits the vision of Emerson. Emerson was an ardent advocate of the human soul. He saw the presence of a divine aura in every man. He took it upon himself to champion the spiritual quality of man and also made it very sure that his fellow Americans did not lose sight of it altogether. Like Emerson, Herzog also acknowledges the spiritual quest of humanity. He is fully aware of the increasing materialism of the 20th century but at the same time recognizes the relationship between the physical and spiritual, body and soul, and therefore the necessity of balancing them in one’s personal life as well as in the life of others. He believes that humankind is basically embedded in the spirit. Without the soul: “Human life is simply the raw material of technological transformation, of fashion, salesmanship, industry, politics, finance, experiment, automatism et cetera, et cetera” (185). Herzog believes that the soul is inherent in everyone. It is an: “. . . inspired condition. . . . It is not reserved for Gods, kings, poets, priests, shrines but belongs to mankind and to all of existence.” (165). He realizes that this is the basic part that constitutes his life. He is aware of the inherent relationship between physical and spiritual
and the need for coordinating them to find equilibrium. Herzog is thus able to find peace with the realization of the coming together of both body and soul.

Herzog’s friends’ experiences regarding this concept are different. His childhood friend Nachman has disgust for the physical. He is an idealist and deems himself a pure soul that understands only pure things, but his spiritual bias makes him a stranger to the world, incapable of coming with the demands of practical life. Contrary to Nachman, Herzog’s Chicago lawyer Himmelstein is a materialist who can see nothing beyond the physical. He has no faith in human dignity or in spiritual capacity. When deceived by his second wife Madeleine, Herzog goes to Himmelstein for comfort. The latter advises:

“Guys at our time in life must face facts. . . . Facts are nasty.” (83-86) He also says:

“We’re all whores in this world, and don’t you forget it. I know damn well I’m a whore.” (85) Of course, Herzog shuns the excesses of both the spiritual and the physical. He rejects the first as unreal and the second as brutal and tough. In fact, human strength is not in extremes, but in avoiding extremes and keeping a balance. He believes in spiritual unity or brotherhood of mankind. His view is that although it is necessary for all people to be independent and self-reliant to fulfill the soul’s potential, at the same time it is indispensable for everyone to maintain a sense of fellowship and love and without these, there cannot be fulfillment.

Moses Herzog is able to identify himself and emerge as an intellectual survivor when he attempts to live up to the grandeur of his name Moses Elkanah Herzog, E meaning God has created. Bellow’s use of the name Moses indicates that he wants to show the readers a parallel to the biblical name. Herzog is a leader, a teacher, a bearer of the light of knowledge and insight in this world. The biblical Moses was an instrument of God, he was sent by God to redeem man from sin and death. Bellow’s Herzog is concerned with the present generation that has prevented notions of life and death. Herzog
comes to the realization that life and death have meaning when seen in terms of a contract with God, where by man is not: “the principal, but only on loan,” (285) to himself. Death is the termination of that contract, and only God exercises that power. Herzog is finally able to rekindle his consciousness which enables to gain momentary glimpse of its transcendental reality. Herzog is seen moving from a state of sickness to health in the realm of the mind. When Herzog invites Ramona to dinner, his brother Will is worried whether his brother is once again selecting a fatal choice. To Will’s question: “Am I leaving you in good hands, Mose?” (338) Moses Herzog gives his classic answer: “I’m not being left in anyone’s hands.”(338) It is quite obvious that the turmoil in his mind is over and there would be no more pressure to write the never-to-be sent letters. Though it cannot be affirmed that Herzog has arrived at a major spiritual realization or enlightenment, he has definitely arrived at a state of awareness with a potential for inward progress and intellectual survival. Several experiences that he has, made him understand and accept that life is essentially worth living and God is not a concept but the only reality. Herzog’s affirmation of God’s omnipotence is quite genuine and undoubtedly the Bellow hero has come a long way since Joseph in Dangling Man who refused to implore God’s blessings. Herzog acknowledges the supreme glory and power of God and gets spiritually enlightened. His view of the life in this world is now more optimistic.

The background of Mr. Sammler’s Planet is the Holocaust with its millions of corpses and its effect upon survivors like Mr. Sammler, Shula, Eisen etc. The Holocaust is a crime not only against the Jews but against civilization, culture, education and religion. The novel is also overshadowed by the devastation of World War II, the near extinction of the Jews during the Holocaust era and again in Israel during the Six-day War. This reveals the decline of humanity which has resulted in the deterioration of the quality of life even in a large metropolis like New York. Mr. Sammler, a witness to the decadence of
contemporary New York and the breakdown of certain morals, as a survivor of the Nazi Holocaust becomes withdrawn and bookish and is determined to live out the last years of his life by reading the Bible. Every Bellow hero is initially a spiritually a displaced person and Mr. Sammler is no exception. He is both literally and figuratively spiritually displaced person. Because of the suffering he has witnessed and experienced, particularly in the Holocaust, Sammler has become a man for whom human feeling and spirituality are apparently inaccessible. His experience of the atrocities of Poland affected him emotionally and so severely that: “For quite a long time he had felt that he was not necessarily human.” (MSP 95) He becomes indifferent not only towards others but even to the thoughts of his own recovery. It took a very long time for him to return to normalcy. In his old age, he assesses his own life, evaluates human existence and ultimately affirms his faith in God and in man. Prior to the war and even after the war Sammler does not believe in God. Even in his early days he did not have much belief in spiritually. His exposure to reality and his personal crisis gradually changed his attitude. At the time when he was waiting to be shot in the mass grave Sammler had no belief in God and he was quite self-centered. The sheer necessity of survival compells Sammler to overcome his self-centredness and turn to God. He discovers that: “a straw or a spider thread or a stain, a beetle or a sparrow had to be interpreted. Symbols everywhere and metaphysical message” (73)

The aging hero Artur Sammler, is overwhelmed by the moral, physical, intellectual and psychological chaos surrounding him in New York city. Good fortune alone has enabled him to evade death at the hands of the Nazis and come to the US. Once here, this intellectual hero quickly discovers that he is an alien in a frenzied and incomprehensible culture and feels very much out of place. The backdrop of the novel is not only New York’s diversity and decay, but also the excitement then in the air about Apollo moon
landing and the potential for a new frontier for humanity. Yet Sammler is not so sure about humanity’s potential at all. He is greatly disturbed by the varied forces of madness that are destroying our planet and he feels that leaving the planet to inhabit a new one is no solution. The inevitability of death does not spur Sammler to seek the essence of life in exciting adventures like moon-travel. He considers death as a moment of honour to an individual who is aware of his sense of duty, and it is an occasion to get a release from the bondage of the ordinary life full of vexations and afflictions. When Dr. Govinda Lal thinks that the conquest of the moon is a rational necessity, Sammler takes up an orthodox stance against Lal’s argument and asserts that the desire to abandon the earth for the moon can hardly be called rational.

The voyage to the moon is symptomatic of man’s eternal hunger for the illimitable, a hunger that has always brought anguish and misery in its wake. Basic problem will not be resolved on another planet because human dissatisfaction may assume more intense forms there. (Kulshrestha 141)

Several times, throughout the novel, there are indications that Sammler’s progress represents a spiritual development. Sammler holds fast to his religious principle - duty, obligation, love, respect, deep and abiding faith in immortality, desire for eternal peace, and lasting hope for salvation. Though he is presented at the beginning as a recluse, he is not so. He has friends who continuously seek him for his wit, conversation and counsel and they often confess their lives to him, almost beyond his patience. Sometimes he feels that the world gets in his way with questions that confuse him. Sometimes his answers are irrelevant and he knows pretty well that he does not have acceptable answers for people or for himself.

Mr. Sammler is called a symbolic character. His friends and family had made him a judge and a priest. As a spiritual thinker, Sammler represents those virtues of character so
elusive in this contemporary world. What makes him a spiritually enlightenment man is his higher virtues even when he is surrounded by people with lower ones. Sammler is capable of reflecting those virtues on his life. What distinguishes Sammler from the other heroes is that he is a man who is nearing the end of his life, but one who still entertains the possibility that man will attain a high position in future. Like his nephew Elya Gruner, Sammler has fulfilled the terms of his contract. He rejects his former self and creates a more humane personality. He learns the validity of the reality instructions provided by Elya Gruner. He earns his intellectual hero status as he exemplifies and defends the dignity of man thus emerging into an intellectual survivor. On the strength of Elya Gruner’s example, Sammler is able to reject the theories of his late friend H.G.Wells and recent acquaintance Dr.Govinda Lal, that space exploration may provide an alternative for man’s problems on earth. Sammler is now certain that salvation must come from a certain purity of soul. What Sammler asserts is not merely natural goodness but “natural knowledge,” which is the knowledge of good and evil. To know good and evil one need not study books or attend university, one need not listen attentively to learned rabbis and philosophers. It is not required even to go back to nature as Herzog does. Knowledge of good and evil is more accessible than that, man only has to listen to his inmost heart. The natural knowledge that guides Sammler is similar to the doctrine of redemption by God. It is in a sense, attaining knowledge of good and evil without extensive study, this is something that all know all along. Sammler is one who believes in God but he shows it in the form of the “contract” which implies a faith not merely about a human bond but also in man’s obligation to create this bond between each other. With love, faith and compassion this planet can be made man’s home. Here in this planet one can make strong relationships and meanings that can go beyond the individual life and reduce even the terror of the unknown future.
Man must labour to emulate God by realizing the sanctity of life. If life is sacred, then survival is an obligation. One of the most important and mysterious aspects of the Jewish people, is their ability to survive in spite of massacres, Holocaust and Diaspora. This clinging to life is due to their view that life is a gift from God which must be preserved at all costs. Bellow’s novels are a form of survival literature, testimonials to life. Bellow’s protagonists, especially Sammler opt for life. This noble conception of man prevents Bellow from presenting his characters as wretched and doomed. Sammler’s courage, conduct and conviction that he brings to his personal ethics grow out of his faith in God. Even though he knows that his harshness with Angela may affect his financial security, he confronts her when she refuses to meet her dying father. The humble prayer of Meister Eckhardt that Sammler reads in the library establishes Sammler’s own faith and courage:

God is the Spirit of spirits. The fruit of the spirit is love, joy, and peace. . . .

For certainly as long as creatures comfort and are able to comfort you, you will never find true comfort. But if nothing can comfort you save God, truly God will console you. (209)

Bellow, through Mr. Sammler associates the idea that life is sacred and that duty is significant and is a sign of spirituality. A sense of duty is similar to obeying the stern voice of God. Only a spiritually enlightened man is capable of understanding the value of duty by which one can attain immense satisfaction. When Dr. Lal argues that duty is hateful Mr. Sammler replies:

When you know what pain is, you agree that not to have been born is better. But being born one respects the power of creation, one obeys the will of God—with whatever inner reservations truth imposes. As for duty—
you are wrong. The pain of duty makes the creature upright and this uprightness is no negligible thing. (182)

This passage shows Sammler’s spirituality, his respect for human life and for all the creations of God. At the same time there is also an instinct to survive. Sense of duty and obligation towards other people is often what keeps man connected to life and to God and what inspires him to survive. Sammler is critical of the modern religion but he has achieved a clarity and proper vision of God and religion. What is praiseworthy of this protagonist is his religious inclination associated with virtue of duty and civility. “Artur Sammler is the first of Bellow’s heroes to forge a viable connection with the world and affirm it through a personal ethic sanctified by a faith in God.” (Kulshreshtha 143)

Mr. Sammler’s spirituality is in contrast with Dr. Govinda Lal’s irreligious view of life. Sammler believes that the soul has a natural knowledge which he says is the soul’s sensing the presence of God which persists, in spite of man’s attempt to convince himself that he is a rational being. Man is not able to understand everything clearly and hence he has disbelief and he finds it difficult to acknowledge that everything cannot be known. When he accepts this mystery, he is led towards affection and love. This makes it possible for him to affirm life here in this earth. When he ultimately finds peace within himself on this planet he has no need to seek a better life on the moon. He says: “The best I have found is to be disinterested. Not as misanthropes dissociate themselves by judging, but by not judging. By willing as God wills.” (MSP195) Further Sammler does not agree with Lal’s assertion that duty is painful and repulsive. Only a spiritually enlightened man is capable of saying: “. . . being born . . . one obeys the will of God- with whatever inner reservation truth imposes. (182) Survival is still possible - re-birth through spiritual enlightenment is still possible on this planet, but always at the cost of great sacrifice and suffering. In his prayer over Elya Gruner, Mr. Sammler finally comes to terms with both
life and death and consequently, he comes into communion with both the spiritual and the physical – the infinite world of God and the finite world of humanity. Mr. Sammler’s prayer shows that Elyas’s death has brought about another re-birth in Mr. Sammler. This new life enables him to overcome the narrowness of his own thinking. Elya’s life of perfection which is contradictory, like giving shelter to Sammler, and his imperfection in taking money for abortion, has made Sammler aware that life is full of contradictions. He sees in Elya a great life spent, giving out the knowledge that one must live one’s life for others, not only for one’s self. Although Elya has shown weakness for materialistic gains, his ability to give and understand people remains exemplary. The ending of Mr. Sammler’s Planet with a prayer indicates the growing importance of the religious sense in Bellow’s work. Though his heroes do not arrive at any intellectual belief in God, they experience isolated moments of illumination and a deep sense of God’s presence. In fact, this mystical sense of God’s presence frees them from explanations and proofs and this is what makes them spiritually enlightened and subsequently motivates them to emerge as intellectual survivors.

In spite of Mr. Sammler’s denunciation of the terrible America of the sixties and his vision of New York as a city of crime, filth, barbarity, the novel ends with affirmation and with the emergence of the protagonist as an intellectual survivor. Mr. Sammler’s prayer for his dead nephew affirms faith in some basic truths about God and man. His prayer also emphasizes God’s existence and man’s duty. Through the example of Sammler, the novel rejects nihilism totally. Despite all the harsh experiences that Mr. Sammler had - burial in a mass grave, digging himself out from the corpses including his wife’s, hiding in a mausoleum in a Polish cemetery, barely existing like a half-starved animal in a forest, killing a German soldier who begged for his life- Sammler is not a nihilist. In other words, Bellow is against nihilism. Sammler affirms the old truths, and
even the *Holocaust* has not broken the terms of the contract between God and man. This awareness and acceptance of God emphasize the spiritual enlightenment and intellectual survival of Mr. Sammler - in fact of man himself.

Saul Bellow is able to present his protagonists as reaching others with love and care because Bellow believes that man is: “created in the image of God.” The importance of religious faith in the attainment of selfhood is not to be overlooked. A happy and peaceful life is possible when there is complete surrender of one’s will to the will of God. The spiritually enlightened Bellow protagonists finally surrender to the will of God by accepting love and community. The powerful forces of love and spirituality are the two essential elements of Bellow’s dynamic vision. Bellow’s vision consists of charged insights and intuitions that he does not define but embodies them in his fiction. However his later fiction demands a: “more comprehensive account of what we human beings are, who we are, and what this life is for.” (Bellow Nobel Lecture) The spiritually enlightened Bellow hero returns to society with his full knowledge that it lies in man either to create heaven out of hell or vice versa and that man can rise to the state of a saint or sink to the level of a devil. Man ceases to be a victim if he shifts to a condition of a spiritually enlightened man. One will find his existence meaningful in acceptance and not in rejection. Bellow’s view of an exact human being centers on certain principles like ‘God’s will’ and ‘man’s duty’ which are the only ways for the spiritual, social and intellectual survival amidst chaos in the contemporary society.

Another aspect of Bellow’s writings can be seen - the influence of Indian philosophy and religions thoughts on Bellow’s mind. Consciously or unconsciously many of his beliefs and convictions seem to have their origin in Indian philosophy. Bellow expresses his belief and acquaintance with the *Vedic* and *Upanishadic* seers and has obtained profound insights through Indian thought. His protagonists seem to echo many of
the truths of Indian philosophy in his novels. Indian philosophy believes that society is necessary for the development of man. Bellow also makes his heroes confront society. The *Upanishads* asks man to lay aside his pride of intellect and self-consciousness and approach life with the fresh outlook of a child. The principal requirement set by Indian philosophy for spiritual revelation is that the: “highest truths are to be felt by the simple and pure minded and not proved to the sophisticated intellect.” (Radhakrishnan177) This requirement is fulfilled by all the heroes of Bellow. Bellow’s optimism, his ultimate hopefulness reminds one of the optimism of Indian philosophy. In all his novels, he has advocated Indian idea of having control over our appetite, human being’s duty towards others, and a deep and abiding faith in the immortality of the soul and a desire for eternal peace.

Bellow’s awareness of Indian religion and ethics are found in many of his novels. In *Dangling Man* there is reference to Siva, dancing his cosmic dance. Joseph, the protagonist of *Dangling Man* laments: “If I had as many mouths as Siva has arms and kept them going all the time . . . ” (*DM* 9) In *Seize the Day*, Bellow uses the word “Buddha” for purely descriptive purpose. Wilhelm has a “Buddha’s head” (*STD* 75). The talk session between King Dahfu and Henderson after the rain festival has many parallels to the scene in *Bhagavad Gita*, between Lord Krishna and Arjuna, just before the battle of Kurukshetra. Henderson sees King Dahfu against the background of many-coloured haloes. Lord Krishna reveals himself to Arjuna as a man of radiating splendour. Both Arjuna and Henderson are guided by teacher figures without whom in Indian tradition, one cannot acquire spiritual wisdom and without whose help, in Bellow’s fiction, the protagonist cannot proceed on his quest. Krishna teaches Arjuna about the human soul and arouses the sleeping soul. King Dahfu bestows on Henderson his own deep faith in mankind and in the spiritual enlightenment of man. Bellow’s later fiction *Mr. Sammler’s*
Planet contains terms like, *karma, maya, nirvana* and *yog*, the four basic concepts that form the essence of Indian spirituality. Bellow uses some of these terms in a colloquial sense. Henderson compares the pink light he sees in Arnewi to “the fringe of Nirvana.” (HRK 102) His definition of *Karma* is simple: “paying for the evil of a past life in this one.” (HG 177) One of Augie March’s friends Kayo Obermark talks about *Moha* meaning opposite of the finite and love is the only answer to *moha* being infinite. The full concept of *maya* comes through in *Mr. Sammler’s Planet*. Mr. Sammler who considers himself an Asian who knows that Jews are Orientals is fascinated by the philosophy of Schopenhauer, who often used *maya* for the illusory world of individuality. Schopenhauer writes about the cosmic force that cannot be seen. Whatever is manifest is, according to “Hindu Philosophy *Maya*, the veil of appearance that hangs over all human experience.” (MSP 172)

America witnessed a moral and spiritual tumult during the sixties and many American transcendentalists like Emerson and Whitman and the British writers W.B. Yeats and T.S. Eliot sought solutions to the spiritual and moral problems of their people in the *Gita* and the *Upanishads*. Many Americans had turned towards Indian philosophy for spiritual replenishment and moral enlightenment. Bellow, like T.S. Eliot, speaks of the moral degradation in his novels but at the same time affirms the fact that people’s belief in God provided them with enlightenment. Bellow suggests order, control, patience, endurance and spirituality as strong supports for survival in this disintegrated world. Bellow’s protagonists are intellectual survivors because they exhibit maturity of mind, clarity of vision and strength of spirit.