CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION
Twentieth century America, though well advanced in Science and Technology has offered little for the peace and security of the individual. The nuclear explosions during the Second World War, their future threat of complete annihilation of mankind, the succession of wars from Korea to Vietnam, the revulsive discriminations of race, and the collapse of the ancient, traditional values have made the individual man small, very lonely and miserable. Amidst a violent, hedonistic, and apathetic atmosphere, the individual has to struggle hard for his survival. According to Ihab Hassan, in spite of the great advancement in the field of Science in America, the American individual finds the world around him “in the form of organised chaos, a demonic mixture of order and anarchy” (Contemporary American Literature 2). Evelyn Gross Avery also feels that the worth of the individual is completely reduced in this industrialized age in America and the so called technological Society has produced only “hollow men”, drifting along aimlessly in life (Rebels and Victims 3). The American individual is perplexed and distracted world without end in spite of so much material prosperity. In such a state, “Alienation” becomes the key word in American Literature. The modern American Society abounds with “the loss of Love, the dissolution of marriage and destruction of marriage” (Avery 56). Without love or affection, Sex is unholy, an expression of base desires corrupting both partners. Men and
women desert each other, seeking solace elsewhere, thus neglecting their children. Everywhere, there are signs of unfulfilled ambitions and unending quest for peace and security. As Joseph Campbell says in his *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, the individual has been “Split in two” (388) and “where light was” (388) in the ancient times, “there is darkness” (388) at present. He means the individual’s loss of faith in religion and the collapse of “the long inherited, timeless universe of symbols” (387).

B.M. Bhalla talks about the desperate condition of the American individual in the post World War II period. According to him, there is a sense of acute self-consciousness and a sense of terror, born of “uncertainty, insecurity, and indignity of modern existence” (20th Century American Novel 2). He further deals with the loneliness and unavoidable boredom of the American life. These aspects create a great fear and a basic urge to escape or find a way out of the contemporary confusion. The new technology and the world wars further have accentuated the American individual’s sense of insecurity and anxiety for survival and identity. The individual is worried about losing his identity in the midst of the “dissent and division” (Bhalla 5) of the day. Political violence and protest movements of various groups have affected the stability of post World War II in America. Evidently the Literature of this period reflects all these elements of disillusionment and disintegration.

According to Richard Chase, the twentieth century American novel was born out of a culture of contradictions. Its genesis lies in “the aesthetic
possibilities of radical forms of alienation, contradiction and disorder" (Bhalla 3). Of all the varied cultural and sub cultural groups in America, the Blacks and the Jews have contributed much in revealing the problems of the pluralist Society in America. Their experiences with persecution makes them "experts in alienation" (Avery 4).

In the post World War II period of bad faith and nihilism, a clear pattern of behaviour emerges in the Afro-American and Jewish-American fiction. The Jew or Negro, facing a harsh treatment in America, can suffer inwardly as a victim, or become a rebel, vehemently opposing others. The victim accepts his predicament passively and even uses his suffering to elevate his moral virtue, but the rebel responds violently towards his oppressors. Generally, in the recent ethnic novels, the Black assumes the role of a rebel, while the Jew assumes the role of a victim. The difference between a rebel and a victim is not in their suffering, but in their response to it (Avery 4).

The Jewish-American writers have really injected a new energy and vitality in their work. The collective experience of the European Jewish immigrants, and the fiction engendered by that experience has given particular intensity to the American world of suffering and conflict. The destruction of the Jews during World War II, the slaughter of millions of Jews by Hitler and the endless programs in Russia have created traumatic impressions on the Jews and they have constantly tried to acquire a secure refuge in America. As such, the Jewish-American writers have attempted to present the complex fate of
being a Jew in America. The main problem of the immigrant Jew in America is that of assimilation and identity. Mark Schechner defines the emergence of the Jewish-American writers since World War II as “a social movement that has had enormous literary consequence” (Qtd. in Hand Book of American-Jewish Literature 61). Saul Bellow, Bernard Malamud, Philip Roth, Tillie Olsen and Cynthia Ozick are considered to be some important Jewish-American writers of this period.

Richard Fein is of the view that what links these American-Jewish writers as a group is not a historical or religious background, but the internalizing of a people’s insecurity” (Qtd. in Hand Book of American-Jewish Literature 62). The sense of insecurity has been the same whether a person is a Jew or a non-Jew. The Jewish-American writers have personalized the insecurity of the individual man. To their inherited knowledge of Jewish folklore, they have added modern American as well as universal problems to enrich their literature. The major themes of American-Jewish literature are “the uneasy coming together of the American and the Jewish, the enormous problems of acculturation and assimilation, and the radical questioning of the traditions and values of both cultures” (Hand Book 62). The American-Jewish novels reveal the fact that America had never been easy for the immigrant Jews. Their dreams of finding a glorious land of freedom after years of oppression and anxiety still remain illusive. Their hopes of finding their homeland in America have miserably failed.
In the earlier novels of the American-Jewish Literature, the heroes express their longing to be reborn in America. Yearning for love and new identity, they rush towards America, and the very sound of America has a magic connotation to it. The Journey or Quest ends in the complete shedding of the old world culture and the absorption of the new values and habits of Christian America, or in cultural fusion – a process of mutual accommodation of both cultures. The approach towards America as depicted in these novels is linked dramatically and metaphorically with an approach to inter-marriage. David Martin Fine focuses on Leslie Fielder’s description of this search for America as “a kind of wooing” (Hand Book 18) and proceeds to say that this initial infatuation slowly gives way to dejection and despair. He illustrates this through Abraham Cahan’s novel, The Rise of David Levinsky, and shows how the glorious hopes of the assimilated Jews for a bright America have waned gradually. Although the hero of the novel, David Levinsky, a Jewish immigrant becomes a very rich man in America, he feels sad that wealth and position have really separated him from love, friendship and compassion. He broods over his past sadly that the gloomiest past is dearer than the brightest present. Thus America has not satisfied the Jew’s longings, but has intensified his misery and loneliness despite material prosperity.

In the latter American Jewish novels, especially in the novels of Saul Bellow, Bernard Malamud and Philip Roth, search for America has been hinted as the pursuit after a forbidden object, which can not give enduring happiness. These writers have witnessed so much of destruction during the Second World
War, including the merciless killing of the Jews by Hitler, and they are no longer lured by false hopes towards the American ideals. They have had the opportunity of seeing the plight of the Jew in contemporary America and his response towards the ambitions of the Western culture. They know that America has not been easy for a Jew or for any other individual to live in. The vast disparity between the individual’s expectations and actual achievements is ironically presented in their novels, and often Allegory is the immediate convenient mode to convey their thoughts and ideas.

It would be pertinent here to mention the first century Roman writer, Quintilian’s categorization of Allegory, to show how this allegorical mode serves as a suitable device for the Jewish-American writers, enabling them to bring out the difference between the actual state of Man in the post World War II period, and the better state which is expected of him. According to Quintilian, Allegory is either “one thing in words and another in meaning”, or “something absolutely opposed to the meaning of words” (Qtd. in Allegory, The Critical Idiom 49). Under the first category, Quintilian discusses the use of metaphor, simile, and other symbolic modes of writing. In the second group, he discusses the element of irony. Both these categories are used in the Jewish-American Fiction, though the second category is the most popular one. As moral degradation, sense of insecurity, alienation, and frustration are the obvious elements in the plight of an ordinary individual in the post World War II period, the use of irony becomes indispensable in the literature of this period, especially in the Jewish-American Fiction. The shocking awareness of the
difference between what Man is, and what he ought to be, has propelled the Jewish-American writers to resort to an ironical approach and express the need for moral regeneration, always accompanied by a life of love, compassion, and humanism, through various allegorical modes of characterization.

As Jackson J. Benson points out, the central tradition of the American fiction has been often allegorical. According to him, the allegory is humanistic, "emphasizing such concerns as the liberation of the human spirit and the need for love, faith and respect in human relationships" (The Fiction of Bernard Malamud 20). He further points out that the American Fiction brings out the persistent spiritual conflict within the American Psyche through Allegory. Very often the protagonists are ordinary men, distinguished only by misery and the sense of victimization. The American-Jewish fiction writers have sought to portray human existence as characterized by a struggle towards a better life. They consistently express the protagonists' conflicts through the universal patterns of allegory, "the journey, battle or conflict, the quest or search and transformation" (Gray The Transformation of Allegory 15).

Bernard Malamud is not only a leading author in the school of American-Jewish fiction, but he is one of the significant contributors to the contemporary American Literature. According to Sheldon Norman Grebstein, "Malamud best represents the phenomenon of the Jewish Movement: not only is he one of its founders and major practitioners, he is probably its best single exemplar" (Qtd. in Contemporary American Literature (1945-1972) 178). He has been
greatly influenced by Nathaniel Hawthorne who has started the mode of Allegory in American Fiction. Hawthorne has been called “the faithful allegorist”, who “injected new life into an ancient and honourable literary tradition” (Becker Hawthorne’s Historical Allegory: An Examination of American Conscience 5). Just as Hawthorne’s allegorical characters are not the stereotypes of Puritan existence, but have the roundness of real people, Malamud’s characters are not mere Jewish types, but they vibrate with life. Hawthorne’s short stories like “The Celestial Railroad” and “Young Goodman Brown” are subtle exposures of the contemporary Man’s depraved condition, with an ironic approach. His allegorical characterization is very effective in his novel The Scarlet Letter. The main character, Arthur Dimmesdale, moves between the role of a sinner and a saint. Hester Prynne’s pain becomes very real to the readers as she silently bears the consequences of her sin. Her daughter, Pearl represents sin, but she is endowed with all the qualities necessary for an active personality. Arthur Dimmesdale and Hester Prynne feel that Pearl is “the living hieroglyphic” (The Scarlet Letter 201) in whom their secret, which they try to hide, is revealed. Thus the allegorical characterization in Hawthorne “is rooted in the deeper realism of human psychology” (Becker 177).

Like Hawthorne, Malamud attempts to avoid stereotypes and devises “personalities, that are multilayered, human beings that are intricate and independent” (Alter The Good man’s Dilemma: Social Criticism in the Fiction of Bernard Malamud 83). His characters are placed in the world of suffering
and misfortune. They realize that their life is meaningless without love, compassion and faith in the goodness of others. They search for a meaningful existence and through self-scrutiny and taking up of responsibilities, they emerge into better individuals. Malamud has the optimistic concept of mankind, and he affirms that there is still hope for the individual though he is encircled in an atmosphere of greed, lust and hatred. He can still seek to be better in the face of deprivation and disaster. Malamud himself has said in an interview: “My premise is that we will not destroy each other. We will live on. We will seek a better life” (Lasher conversations with Bernard Malamud 7). Malamud is out and out for humanism, and strongly against nihilism. He makes his ideal very clear when he says that he is dead against “the colossally deceitful devaluation of man in this day” (Saturday Review 12 Oct 1963 32).

In all his eight novels, and four collections of short stories, Malamud has showed a regard for the plight of the ordinary man in modern times. Most of his protagonists are Jews. He unequivocally affirms: “I write about Jews because I know them. But more important I write about them because the Jews are the very stuff of drama” (Conversations with Bernard Malamud 3). According to him “all men are Jews” (Hershinow Bernard Malamud 139). Allegorically, he handles the Jew to represent “a good man struggling for a meaningful existence in the prison of life” (Hershinow 139). Moreover he treats the Jew as a symbol of man’s sad experience of suffering. He says, “I try to see the Jew as the universal man. Every man is a Jew though he may not
know it” (Conversations with Bernard Malamud 30). Hence the Jew represents every man who suffers and endures, in Malamud’s fiction.

Malamud also develops the idea of the regenerative power of suffering by using the Jew as a symbol of conscience and moral behaviour. The Jew is innocent, passive, and capable of great moral endurance. Recruiting the past collective Jewish experience, Malamud finds a surprising measure of “instinctive dignity and inbred humanitarianism” (Hershinow 8), during pain and persecution. His Jew is always associated with good moral conduct. Even when he does something wrong, he repents for it, atones for it and sets himself right. Malamud affirms that every man as reflected in a Jew has a tendency to reform himself through suffering and self-scrutiny even in the midst of corruption and disorder. His definition of Jewishness includes universal virtues such as moral obligation towards one’s fellowmen, acceptance of responsibility, involvement in others’ burdens and learning from one’s suffering. His heroes begin as timid men, but they gradually attain the courage to face the consequences of their mistakes and reform themselves. It is true that they are ego-centric, lustful and frustrated in the beginning, but through the painful process of suffering they are driven to intense self-scrutiny in which they realize their past errors and begin to be considerate towards the needs of other individuals.

Malamud’s Jewish Protagonists conform to the image of the schlemiel. Though Malamud has said that he disliked “the Schlemiel characterization as a
taxonomical device” as it “reduces to stereotypes, people of complex motivations and fates” (The Paris Review (Spring 1975) 59). Critics find these types in Malamud’s fiction. Yet his characters do not become stereotypes. On the contrary, his schlemiel characterization instils more energy and breathes more life into his characters. According to Sheldon Hershinow, a schlemiel is “the isolated loner who represents the hopes, fears and possibilities of twentieth century humanity” (Bernard Malamud 141). Malamud’s treatment of the schlemiel is often humorous and it provides a safety valve to the tensions and heart-breaking situations of the time (Hershinow 178). Actually the schlemiel figure, powerless and pitiable, has grown out of the ironic Jewish situation in history. In Jewish folklore, a schlemiel is a fool, “a man who falls below the average human standard, but whose defects have been transformed into a source of delight” (Wisse The Schlemiel as Modern Hero 4). Though the schlemiel is ridiculed for his foolishness at times, he is also exalted for his hard inner strength, and he becomes the symbol of endurance. In the Jewish-American Fiction, the schlemiel is often the luckless individual, who stumbles upon one defeat after the other. Malamud’s protagonists are schlemiels in the sense that they not only have unfortunate family backgrounds, but they are also miserable misfits, failing time and again in their relationship with other people. Often they find things happening contrary to their expectations and wish. Yet Malamud’s optimistic concept of life can be seen even in the treatment of his schlemiels. Though his Jewish schlemiels are luckless, they serve to affirm the possibility of dignity for all. They are undoubtedly prisoners of circumstances, and yet they manage to find the means of regeneration.
Miraculously, some of them even turn from “social scapegoats to mythical redeemers” (Hassan 39), and they save the other people too.

This thesis is aimed at discussing the allegorical modes of characterization in Bernard Malamud’s novels at four levels. First, Malamud’s protagonists are allegorical, Jewish Schlemiels, who become symbols of conscience, endurance and moral behaviour, through the painful process of suffering and self-scrutiny. They don’t succumb to depression and destruction, but struggle against corruption and cowardice, emerging out as victors in this age of nihilism and anachronism. Allegorically, they represent all man, having all the human follies and foibles, lacking in determination, failing in duty, and committing again and again the same error. Yet they learn to examine themselves through suffering, recognize their past worthlessness, and move towards a different new life. Malamud himself says of his own heroes, “A Malamud character is some one who fears his fate, caught up in it, yet manages to out-run it”. (Helterman Understanding Malamud 2). He also says that his characters are “God-Haunted”, noted for “their love of people and God” (Conversations with Bernard Malamud 50). The effectiveness of the Jewish characters with their situations is related to Malamud’s view of suffering. The Jews have suffered unjustly in their long history and they serve Malamud as “representatives of human kind” (Abramson Bernard Malamud Revisited 142), through their acceptance of suffering with love, compassion and patience.
We can illustrate this from Malamud's novel, *The Assistant*. The protagonists, Morris Bober and Frank Alpine are allegorical, representing every man. They are symbols of conscience, compassion and moral behaviour. Morris Bober is a Jew by birth and Frank Alpine becomes a Jew in the end physically by the Jewish ritual of circumcision, and symbolically through the process of suffering and self-scrutiny. Morris Bober is not only a Jew outwardly, but he also embodies the essential spirit of Jewishness. As the owner of a small grocery store, he is very kind towards his customers. In spite of poverty, bad luck, and inner conflicts, he does not lose faith in humanity and he is compassionate even at the cost of self-effacement. At the beginning of the novel, he is seen getting up early to give a three cent roll to a poor Polish woman, his regular customer. If any customer leaves the change absent-mindedly on the counter, Morris runs after him even bare-footed to give it back. He is unable to see the tears of the daughter of "the drunk woman". (*The Assistant* 2). He readily obliges to give her bread on credit, though he can never hope to get money for it, and he himself is on the verge of starvation. In fact he is a schlemiel. Despite his immigration to America, bad luck continues to haunt him in the shape of poor business. He suffers mainly on account of his honesty and moral integrity. He is against all the guiles and tricks in business. America does not offer him prosperity according to his expectations. It is said in the novel that "as a man in America, he rarely saw the sky" (*The Assistant* 4), symbolising that in America, he never got the freedom and happiness he anticipated. Though Bober can be classified as a Jewish Schlemiel, Malamud never lets down his character to a flat stereotype, but endows him with life and
power. In spite of his misfortunes, Morris rises to the level of a model of virtues—a model to be cherished and followed. In fact he is the symbol of hope and endurance. At the funeral service, the Jewish Rabbi praises him: "Morris Bober was to me a true Jew because he lived in the Jewish experience, which he remembered, and with the Jewish heart" (The Assistant 195).

Frank Alpine, the main protagonist of the novel, though an Italian by birth, becomes Jewish, first by the deep inward transformation, and then by circumcision. In the beginning, Frank is a thief and a criminal. He, and Ward Minogue, a rogue, attack Morris and deprive him of fifteen dollars. After this sinful act, Frank feels sorry for his crime and wants to make amends by his service in the store. He becomes the assistant to Morris, and captures the spirit of Jewishness from his boss. When Frank tells him that real Jewishness means "to do what is right, to be honest, to be good" (150), Frank is deeply convinced. Hence a good man and a good Jew are identical in Malamud's moral vision. The novel begins with Frank's sinful act of stealing, moves forward with his expiation, and closes with his conversion or redemption. Like the great saint, St. Francis of Assisi, his name-sake, Frank, the assistant wants to get rid of his old life and embrace a new life. He has to struggle hard to turn over a new leaf. He commits many a blunder like stealing money from the store, and thrusting himself on Helen, Morris Bober's daughter, before the appropriate time. His hasty act changes her love for him to hatred for a season. Yet he determines to correct all his mistakes. He works very hard in the store after the death of Morris, and even works in some other store to help in Helen's education.
Neither Helen’s indifference nor hatred is able to shake him from his self-discipline and penance. He becomes the symbol of patience and stoic endurance. His staying power through adverse circumstances surprises Helen who relents and is willing to accept him as the novel ends. He becomes the symbol of conscience, as his innermost thoughts, revealed in the novel, arouse the conscience of the readers. He decides to do the right thing “on his own will, nobody pushing him but himself” (222). He works tirelessly and unconsciously in such a way that his reflection shows “a bony face”, “with burning eyes” (293). Surely Frank Alpine haunts the readers with questions of moral integrity and goodness in a degraded, dehumanized, and materialized world. As a schlemiel, with nobody to take care of him from his youthful days and no place to sleep in, he finds the grocery store of Bober as his refuge. He himself accepts that his life has been worthless without any aim. From this worthless state, Frank learns to lead a worthy life, by suffering meaningfully with love, compassion and selfless nature. He attains purgation in humility, and is reborn into a new man. Thus Morris Bober and Frank Alpine are Jewish Schlemiels who become the emblems of conscience and compassion.

Secondly, the allegorical mode of characterization is always connected with an allegorical Journey or Quest on the part of the protagonists. Generally the Malamudian protagonist understands that his life is worthless, earnestly longs for a change, and undertakes a journey or quest to make himself better or improve the conditions around him. Most of the protagonists have no desire to take up responsibilities, or get involved in the lives of others, sharing their
burdens, but they arrive at a new situation when the quest ends up in “a tangle of relationships, commitments and responsibilities” (Qtd. in CLC 2 268). The protagonist who wishes to forget his miserable past with his failures and frustrations, understands that he can not get rid of his past so easily as “past hides but is present” (A New Life 53). He also realizes that happiness and satisfaction can not be attained by a careless and irresponsible life, but only by suffering for others. Painful suffering teaches him that he should not shirk responsibilities, but he should be considerate and compassionate towards the needs of others. Thus he overcomes his ego-centredness and undergoes a surprising transformation. Often the quest leads to a deep self-realization and inner change which motivate the protagonist to go forward resolutely in his new situation. Sandy Cohen feels that, by the quest of the protagonist for a new life, Malamud allegorises “Every man’s quest for self-identification and of understanding of heterogeneous and too often hostile society” (Bernard Malamud and the Trial by Love 12). It is true that some protagonists are shocked by the existing values of the new place or situation, corrupt and materialistic, but they are able to find the universal virtues of love and compassion at least in some individuals who help the protagonist attain self-realization and become a better being.

This Quest motif can be clearly illustrated from Malamud’s novel A New Life, in which the protagonist Levin undertakes a long journey in the beginning of the novel from New York City of the East to the North West in search of a new life. He has miserably failed in the past, and he desperately
longs to for a better life in the Western part of the country. The novel begins with the line, "S.Levin – formerly a drunkard, after a long and tiring transcontinental journey, got off the train at Marathon, Cascadia, towards the evening of the last Sunday in August, 1950" (A New Life 7). Like the other Malamudian heroes, Levin is a Jewish Schlemiel, a victim of circumstances. His father dies as a thief in prison and his mother commits suicide after a period of madness following her husband’s death. Levin’s misplaced love deepens his frustration and his life becomes very miserable. Suddenly he gets wisdom from books and resolves to start a new life. He gets an M.A. from the New York University and applies to various colleges before he gets his appointment as a tutor at Cascadia College. He has to travel thousands of miles to take up the job and he has high expectations of the place. He wants to get rid of his purposeless past and hopes that a new place will inspire a change in his life. Yet he finds the place and the college contrary to his expectations.

The objectives proposed by Mr. Fairchild, the Head of the Department, and Mr. Gerald Gilley, the composition Director are never realized practically. In formal get-togethers, Mr. Fairchild talks about the virtue of research and pursuit of academic excellence, but in his private conversation with Levin, he expresses his antipathy towards liberal arts. Levin regrets that the educational system at Cascadia miserably fails to teach “how to keep civilization from destroying is itself” (A New Life 103). Mr. Fairchild warns him not to have affairs with the girl students and the faculty wives, but these are the very sins he commits during his stay at college. Feeling very lonely, he has affairs with
Nadalee his student, Miss Avis Fliss, his colleague, Laverna, a waitress and Pauline Gilley, his composition Director’s wife.

Ruth B. Mandel points out, that “He (Levin) has moved from sex and a waitress, sex and his colleague Avis, sex and his student Nadalee, sex and Pauline Gilley to Pauline minus sex, to self sacrifice for the idea of love” (Bernard Malamud and the Critics 263). What begins in adultery with Pauline Gilley ends in responsibility. He is willing to take up the responsibility of Pauline, the ill-treated wife of Gerald Gilley with the two adopted kids in the end. Theodore Solotaroff says that Levin has to go through “the Malamudian fire of passion and frustration, sacrifice and insight” (Bernard Malamud and the Critics 244) before he gets true freedom from selfishness and rises to the level of accepting responsibility with love.

On the whole, Levin undertakes a symbolic journey from the East to the West in search of new life, and W.J. Handy feels that he does find a new life, “not a new life in a new place, but a new life in a new relationship” (The Fiction of Bernard Malamud 73). Iska Alter feels that Levin undertakes his journey to the West, “the geographical locus of the American Dream, the spiritual embodiment of the Edenic Promise,” (The Goodman’s Dilemma 54), but he is greatly disappointed with the prevailing situation there, an undemocratic atmosphere with no importance attached to liberal arts. He is also shocked at the inhuman nature of Gerald Gilley and the indifferent attitudes of his other colleagues. He involuntarily replaces his predecessor,
Leo Duffy, who was expelled from the college on account of his radical views and later on, commits suicide. Pauline Gilley, the wife of Gerald Gilley, and the former mistress of Leo Duffy, understands him and she “provides the basis for being able to accept the love and responsibility that lies within him”, (Abramson 44), thus helping him achieve a new life. So, Levin’s Journey in search of a meaningful existence in *A New Life* is an illustration of Malamud’s allegorical use of the Journey motif in his novels, leading him towards a better understanding of himself, and ultimately to the higher level of sharing his love and responsibility with others.

Thirdly, Malamud uses the allegorical mode of representing a character or characters near the protagonist as conscience. Usually in his novels, there are characters near the protagonist who “become in some degree objectifications of that which is inside the central characters” (*The Fiction of Bernard Malamud* 21). The objectification by character operates on two levels. First, the character near the protagonist represents his conscience and brings out the protagonist’s lingering internal question to the surface. Norman Leer marks this as “the attraction of characters who mirror a part of each other and are thereby drawn together as doubles” (Qtd. in CLC 8 374). The protagonist’s self can not escape its confrontation with its double, because the latter is the echo of the former. This allegorical mode of characterization is very effective in Malamud’s novels as it clearly reveals the two contradictory tendencies in each of us, “the urge to flee and the determination to fight” (Hershinow 143). It serves to portray the conflict in any individual – conflict between an easy-
going life without any involvement in others’ burdens and the call for acceptance of responsibility. Generally the protagonist yields to the voice of conscience to make way for a better life. In another level, the protagonist’s voice, representing conscience challenges the reader. So, by representing a character as conscience, Malamud arouses the reader from his lethargy. He allegorizes “the inside” of the central character, “pitting him symbolically against himself” (The Fiction of Bernard Malamud 22). As the protagonist is haunted between two alternatives, he is able to haunt the reader too, convicting him of this responsibility. Such is the power of Malamud’s fiction, exercising great influence upon the reader through the allegorical modes of characterization.

We can illustrate this allegorical mode of objectification by conscience from the first section entitled, “Last Mohican” of The Pictures of Fidelman: An Exhibition. Here, the protagonist, Arthur Fidelman, a Research Scholar comes to Italy from America to study on Gioto, a famous painter. He carries with him the opening chapter of his research project in his pigskin leather briefcase. When he arrives in Rome, he quickly experiences a sense of seeing his own reflection, and immediately he perceives a stranger, Shimon Susskind, a person of about his own height, oddly dressed in brown knickers” (Pictures of Fidelman: An Exhibition 5) watching him. Susskind is a Jew, a wanderer from Israel who has lost his passport and does not want to go back. Here Malamud presents Susskind, the other part of Fidelman, who represents the voice of his conscience, and finally helps Fidelman in self-recognition. When Susskind
asks Fidelman for a spare suit, Fidelman refuses to give it to him, saying that he has only two suits and can not afford to give away one. Susskind does not leave Fidelman, but haunts him endlessly like a shadow. When Fidelman asks him if he is in any way responsible for the latter, Susskind strongly replies, “you are responsible. Because you are a man. Because you are a Jew. Aren’t you?” (16). Fidelman is not able to escape Susskind, the voice of his conscience. He tries to run away from Susskind, but he finds him everywhere. When he changes his hotel and sits down for his meal, he perceives Susskind standing there. Again Susskind asks for the spare suit, saying “If I had something to give you, I would gladly give it to you” (20). Fidelman is disturbed by these words and says, “Just give me some peace of mind” (20). Without hesitation, Susskind replies, “That is what you have to find yourself” (20). Fidelman has not yet learnt the fact that compassion and sharing one’s things with the needy alone can bring peace of mind. He plans to leave far Florence to get rid of Susskind, but when he returns to his hotel room with this intention, he finds his briefcase with the first chapter on Gioto missing. He guesses that Susskind has taken away the briefcase on purpose to teach him the lesson of compassion. Now the pursuer becomes the pursued. Fidelman searches Shimon Susskind, who followed Fidelman so far, everywhere, but in vain. Al last Fidelman finds Susskind selling beads and rosaries near a church. Fidelman’s immediate reaction is to hide himself from Susskind as though he fears confrontation with his conscience. When he ventures to ask for his briefcase with the tempting offer of fifteen thousand dollars, Susskind leaves him in haste. Fidelman ransacks his house, but he is not able to find Susskind.
In this depressed mood, he gets the vision of Gioto's painting of saint Francis of Assisi giving his gold cloak to a poor knight. He realizes that his work on Gioto without the true compassionate spirit of Gioto is a waste.

When this understanding dawns on him, he rushes towards Susskind's house to give him the suit. He finds Susskind lighting the candle with "a flaming sheet of paper" which "looked like the underside of a typewritten page" (36). Susskind returns the suitcase, but to his shock, Fidelman finds the first chapter on Gioto missing. He understands that Susskind has burnt the papers and shouts at him. Susskind replies, "The words were there but the spirit was missing" (37). Thus, Susskind, the voice of his conscience awakens Fidelman to self-realization that his work on Gioto contains so many words, but without the spirit. The transformed Fidelman cries out half sobbing. "The suit is yours. All is forgiven" (37). So there is a definite change in Fidelman's attitude when Shimon Susskind, the representation of his conscience arouses him from his pride and self-centredness.

The second level of representing the protagonist as the voice of conscience can be illustrated from Malamud's *The Fixer*. The protagonist Yakov Bok is put in prison on the false accusation of ritual murder. He is tortured in prison and subjected to a lot of inconvenience. In the prison, he reads the Gospels and when he comes across Christ's sufferings on the cross for all mankind, he weeps a lot and asks Kogin, the night guard, "How can anyone love Christ and keep an innocent man suffering in prison?" (The Fixer
210). The question is addressed not only to Kogin or to any Christian, but to each and every reader as well. Yakov is neither an orthodox Jew nor a firm believer in God. His words reveal his loss of faith in God and he is the representative of this lost and lone generation. He asks the readers who profess religion or faith in God how they manage to treat their fellow human beings with lack of love and indifference. Malamud always stands for the dignity of human beings in this dehumanized world. He asks the readers through Yakov Bok how people who profess religion continue to live on with inhuman attitude. Surely this question arouses the reader’s conscience and haunts him endlessly.

Fourthly, Malamud’s allegorical mode of characterization is evident in his use of symbols in the characters and the physical environment, surrounding the characters. His characters are not flat, but they are round and life-like in their ability “to surprise us in a convincing way” (Forster Aspects of the Novel 69). Everything about the characters has allegorical significance, beginning with their names and occupations. Sometimes the names and occupations really suit the characters, and sometimes they are ironical. For example, the name of the protagonist Yakov Bok in The Fixer really suits his character while the name of the Judge Goodwill Banner in The Natural is ironical since the Judge has neither good-will nor compassion towards others. He bears only ill-will towards Roy Hobbs, the protagonist of the novel who is the captain of the team of knights, and Pop Fisher, the manager of the team. He does not wish to support real heroes, but he wants the team to be made the laughing-stock before
all. He instigates Roy Hobbs to accept money from him and drop the pennant-winning game with the team of Pirates. Roy Hobbs is tempted to accept the offer, but fortunately he realizes his mistake and refuses to accept the money.

In *The Fixer*, the first name of the protagonist ‘Yakov’ is the Hebrew name for ‘Jacob’ which means ‘deceiver’. Yakov Bok hides his Jewish identity from his employer Nicholai Lebedev and the workers in the brick factory in which he is appointed the supervisor. Also, he lives in the district of Lukianovsky, a district forbidden for the Jews to live in, by hiding his Jewish identity. The second name ‘Bok’ means “goat”. Actually he becomes a scapegoat in the plot built up by the Russian anti-Semites against the Jews. They want to eradicate the Jews completely and frame false accusations against them on ritual murder. These charges can be traced back to the superstitious belief of the medieval period that the Jews kill the Christian male children on Passover (Jewish celebration on remembrance of the deliverance of the Israelites from the bondage of Egypt) and use the blood as a spray over their Passover matzos. These charges are baseless because from the olden days the Jews never eat blood, which is strictly prohibited in the Bible. By taking the historical persecution of the Jews, Malamud brings out human misery and injustice through Yakov Bok, the scapegoat who suffers for his people, the Jews. Julius Otrovsky, the Jewish lawyer says in the novel to Yakov Bok, “you suffer for us all” (*The Fixer* 273). Even the profession of Yakov Bok has allegorical significance in an ironic manner. His job is that of a fixer who fixes broken things. When he understands his disabilities is prison, he says, “I’m a
fixer, but all my life, I’ve broken more than I fix” (104). He realizes that he has been very proud, self-centred and responsible for creating disharmony.

Physical characteristics of the characters also have allegorical implications. For example, Gerald Gilley in *A New Life* “has no seeds” (*A New Life* 168) as his wife Pauline tells Levin, the protagonist of the novel. It is symbolic of his lack of consideration towards others. He is unable to show love and compassion towards his wife, but only treats her as an object of responsibility. Similarly if a woman has sick or injured breasts, she is incapable of moral and psychological nurturing. For example, Memo Paris in *The Natural* and Avis Fliss in *A New Life* have sick breasts and they are incapable of true love and consideration. The protagonists of these novels, Roy Hobbs and Levin are disappointed with these women. Sometimes the actions and possessions of the heroes have allegorical import. For example Roy Hobbs bat, “Wonder boy” in *The Natural*, a bat hewn from a lightning-blasted oak tree is a symbol of his potential for rebirth. With the bat, he is able to perform wonders in the game of baseball and rejuvenate the team of the knights. When the bat is broken into two halves at the end of the novel, Roy ties the two pieces together with shoelaces and buries it. The ritual of burying the bat symbolises the end of Roy’s career.

Even minor characters in Malamud’s novels are imbued with larger dimensions of allegory. A light bulb peddler namely Breitbart in *The Assistant* carries light bulbs from place to place for sale. He symbolises every man’s
burden and the need for a temporary respite from the heart-breaking problems, in his life: The landlord, Levenspiel in *The Tenants* in whose crumbling tenement, the Jewish writer, Harry Lesser, and the black writer Willie Spearmint occupy, represents Malamud’s voice of hope and plea for compassion in this world of destruction. When the two writers fight and kill each other at the end of the novel, whether it is real or imaginary, as critics differ, Levenspiel cries for mercy again and again. His cry reflects Malamud’s vision of hope and the plea for compassion and mutual understanding, which is the only way for human redemption.

Malamud also creates symbols and metaphors in the physical environment surrounding the characters to suit the allegorical modes of characterization. Outdoor settings such as forests and lakes portray the inner conditions or attitudes of Malamud’s characters. Actually they provide a psychological mirror for their emotional states. For example in *The Natural*, the protagonist takes Memo-Paris, the emblem of evil, to a stream which contains polluted water. It indicates the polluted nature of Memo. On the contrary, he takes Iris Lemon, the emblem of goodness and love to the lake which is calm and beautiful reflecting soft moonlight. The lake symbolises, the selfless, sacrificial attitude of Iris. The forest in which Levin and Pauline Gilley make love in *A New Life* abounds with beautiful trees, evergreen plants and rich grassy meadows which reflect their cheerful mood. The mental anguish and depression of Calvin Cohn, the protagonist of *God’s Grace* is suited to the gloomy surroundings in the beginning of the novel, like “the
heaving high seas”, “the dull sky”, “a black oily rain” and “burdened seas” (God’s Grace 11).

Seasons too, play a predominant role in Malamud’s novels. Generally spring season offers hope and promise to the protagonists. Winter brings despair and discouragement. Summer brings excitement and encouragement while autumn indicates doubt and uncertainty. For example, The Fixer begins in early November. When Yakov Bok sets out on his journey towards Kiev, he finds the winter snow, which forbodes an atmosphere of gloom and depression. When he is arrested and put in prison in April, although the season is spring, Malamud says “Spring came, but stayed outside the bars” (The Fixer 207). It is during the end of October, nearly two and half years after his arrest, the long awaited trial comes. It is autumn, and Yakov is uncertain as to what awaits him in the trial. Sometimes, Malamud uses seasonal phases in an ironic way. For example, The Tenants begins with the lines, “Lesser catching sight of himself in his lonely glass wakes to finish his book. He smelled the living earth in the dead of winter” (The Tenants 9). These lines indicate ironically that people like the Jewish writer Harry Lesser who are without spiritual awakening are content to live in a state of barrenness.

So far, the allegorical modes of characterization in Malamud’s novels have been discussed briefly at four levels. The second chapter, “Protagonists as Jewish Schlemiels” analyses in detail how Malamud’s protagonists are allegorical, representations of Jewish Schlemiels, who emerge into
embodiments of conscience, endurance, compassion, and other humanitarian virtues. The third chapter shows emphatically how all these protagonists undertake an allegorical Journey in search of a newer, fuller, and deeper existence. It is also made clear how this Journey leads to their inner transformation through the painful process of suffering and self-scrutiny. In the fourth chapter, “Objectification of conscience by the characters”, the two levels of representation of conscience in Malamud’s novels are adequately explained and illustrated. It is shown in this chapter, how the characters near the protagonist represent his conscience, awakening him towards self-realization at one level, and how the protagonist himself becomes the reader’s conscience, creating powerful effect, on the second and deeper level. The fifth chapter, “Use of symbols in Malamud’s novels”, points out Malamud’s use of symbols in the characters and the physical environment surrounding the characters to present the depraved, imperfect nature of Man, and voice forth his message of hope powerfully that Man can still be redeemed through love, compassion and mutual understanding. The final chapter – “Summation”, sums up all these allegorical modes of characterization adopted in Malamud’s novels with a note that Bernard Malamud, as a leading writer in the Jewish-American Fiction and one of the significant contributors to contemporary American Fiction, with his allegorical approach, will never cease to be a source of inspiration and enlightenment to the present as well as the succeeding generation. In the light of the discussion above, the next chapter “Protagonists as Jewish Schlemiels” illustrates how the protagonists of Malamud’s novels conform to the image of Jewish Schlemiels, in their miserable backgrounds,
repeated failures, and tendency towards self-aborrence. While they seem to be pathetic unlucky individuals, despised and dejected by others, they never succumb to complete despair. On the contrary, they manage to overcome the unfavourable circumstances and emerge out as victors, triumphing over defeat and depression. They are allegorical representations of every ordinary, passive individual and they reflect Malamud’s optimistic concept of life that Man can conquer the worst surroundings through compassion and a spirit of endurance.