teaching that alienation is rooted in the human condition. (qtd. in Johnson 112)

In the post-modern context, alienation is viewed not merely as a cosmic theme but as a set of phenomena involving many connotations.

Madonna Kolbenschlag raises a pertinent question, focusing on the search for identity and community in American life. She asks why the more privileged who need not worry about food or shelter or clothes experience a sense of abandonment and aloneness. She shows how man in the present world is alienated because of the negative influence of the materialistic society. She compares man in the post-war world to a child lost in a supermarket:

The caretaking parent has suddenly vanished, and the child is overwhelmed with feelings of abandonment, confusion, and panic... The “lostness” of the child, and the feelings that identify that experience, are characteristic of the human condition today. Perhaps it has always been so, but now the lostness seems more universal, more apocalyptic, and at the same time more spiritually wounding. The development of technology, the velocity of communication, the impersonal nature of public policies, the mobility of populations, the cumulative monopolies of resources and power, the changing family and corporate structures—all that we know as “modernity” - have disrupted human bonds and connections in unexpected ways and left us vulnerable. (4)
Kolbenschlag points out that the most urgent question for the contemporary person is not freedom or fulfillment or the future but the only real question is the search for meaning in life. Every person wants to know whether there is a larger story, a universal myth that is unfolding with regard to human existence.

In *Alienation and Charisma: A Study of American Communes*, Benjamin Zablocki states that “all alienation has to do in essence with loss of the ability to make or help make choices” (10). Zablocki maintains that individuals are alienated from the society when they are not able to participate in the society’s consensual decision-making process. The society which fails to involve its members in a consensual decision-making process will be characterized by a high degree of alienation. Zablocki believes that alienation is a complex concept and that the definition of alienation is possible only when the decision making activities of individuals are related to the decision making activities of a collectivity (259).

In an attempt to provide a general definition of alienation, Lewis Feuer distinguishes six different principal modes in which, from the sociological standpoint, alienation is said to characterize the experience of modern people: the alienation of class society, the alienation of competitive society, the alienation of industrial society, the alienation of mass society, the alienation of race and the alienation of the generations (87). In Feuer’s view, these modes of alienation are independent of each other. For example, a class society need not be a competitive society. There have been pre-industrial mass societies, such as the Indian and
Chinese, founded on handicrafts. Feuer also warns that it would be "a major blunder to regard alienation as characteristically a phenomenon of modern society" (90).

Dwight Dean recommends several scales to measure the three important components, "powerlessness, normlessness, and social isolation," related to alienation (753-58). Feuer says that Dean's attempt, too, "fails as a measure of 'alienation' precisely because that experience can be found in every direction of human experience—among the powerful as the powerless, the normful as the normless, the socially involved as well as the isolated" (94). Feuer focuses on Stalin, who was the most powerful in his society and yet was alienated completely from the fellow members of the society: "A power-driven Stalin, aware of his own tyrannical power, but caught and haunted by never-ending anxieties, in a domain of paranoid self-aggrandizement, is an alienated man, estranged from the mankind around him and the socialist aspiration which once had partially moved him" (94).

After examining the various definitions given by social scientists, Feuer arrives at a comprehensive definition of alienation:

"Alienation" is used to convey the emotional tone which accompanies any behaviour in which the person is compelled to act self-destructively; that is the most general definition of alienation, and its dimensions will be as varied as human desire and need... Alienation is the dramatic metaphor of the intellectual who has left the Political Garden of Eden and
projects his experience as the exemplar of all human frustrations. (95)

Alienation denotes the feeling of estrangement and a sense of loss.

Though alienation has always been an integral part of human existence, its dimension has mounted up in the post-war world. With the advent of industrialization and scientific advancements, the individual has lost his personal identity and is associated with some particular function. No account is taken of what is unique and valuable in him. The progress of science has deprived Nature of its human forms and has placed man within a universe that is alien in its vastness. When man has discovered that he stands alone in the universe, faced with nothingness, it becomes imperative for him to search for his "essence." As a result, a crisis of identity has become the hallmark of the post-war world.

The characters of Bellow—Joseph, Asa Leventhal, Wilhelm, Augie, Henderson, Herzog, and Charlie—and those of Parthasarathy—Kasturi, Amirtham, Booma, Vembu Iyer, Kapoor, Mohini, Swarna, Jayaraman, Vimmi, and Dhruv are alienated individuals, lonely and despairing, cut off psychologically from the fellow members of the society.

Joseph, the protagonist of the novel, Dangling Man, aged twenty-seven, an employee of the Inter-American Travel Bureau, a tall, handsome young man, a graduate of the University of Wisconsin, is a philosopher by avocation. He has quit his job and has been waiting for the call from the army for seven months. During this period, he is supported by his wife, Iva, and there is nothing to do but wait or dangle. He writes in his diary: "I have begun to notice that the more active the rest of the world becomes,
the more slowly I move, and that my solitude increases in the same proportion as its racket and frenzy" (10). In his life he has never felt so stock-still. He feels "a narcotic dullness" (DM 14) and every morning when he wakes up, he thinks that he goes "in the body from nakedness to clothing and in the mind from relative purity to pollution" (DM 12). He "suffers from a feeling of strangeness, of not quite belonging to the world, of lying under a cloud and looking up at it" (DM 24). When Amos, his status-conscious brother, advises him to think of the future, Joseph says: "There are many people, hundreds of thousands, who have had to give up all thought of future. There is no personal future any more. That's why I can only laugh at you when you tell me to look out for my future in the Army, in that tragedy. I wouldn't stake a pin on my future" (DM 54).

Joseph's alienation, as Madonna Kolbenschlag analyses the factors which lead man to alienation in Lost in the Land of Oz, springs from loneliness and from the attitude of the indifferent materialistic society. Joseph writes in his journal: "We are a people of tantrums, nevertheless; a word exchanged in a movie or in some other crowd, and we are ready to fly at one another. Only, in my opinion, our rages are deceptive; we are too ignorant and spiritually poor to know that we fall on the 'enemy' from confused motives of love and loneliness. Perhaps, also, self-contempt. But for the most part, loneliness" (DM 121). In Joseph's opinion, the destiny of the individual in the post-war scene is affected by mass conflicts and there is no place for personal identity. He sees his friends drawn into the conflict one by one, either directly, like Morris Abt who is turning out pamphlets in Washington and Jefferson Forman who is killed in the South
Pacific, or indirectly, like his brother Amos and the tailor Fanzell who are getting benefits out of the war. Joseph's quest is for the basic values which he can live by, which he can fight against the dehumanizing forces with because without these basic values life becomes meaningless.

The "dangling" of Joseph is similar to that of Jayaraman in MV. Jayaraman returns to India from America because he wants to be somebody in his own country. His aim is to expose those who deceive the people in the name of new economic policies. He says to Nalina: "I'll stay here and do something for the people. I have not only patriotic feelings but also ambition. Is it enough for a man to save money leaving all the other things in life? What identity do I have in America? I've specialized in Agricultural Economics and I'm going to use this knowledge for my country" (MV 13). The aim of Jayaraman is not fulfilled because he dangles whether to remain in India or to go back to America, whether to join politics or not. Nalina makes a clear analysis of his problem: "When he came from America, he was full of ambition to do many things for the people of his country. This has not happened here. Because of this frustration, he now thinks of joining politics but he can't take the decision firmly. He is in utter confusion as he does not know who the real Jayaraman is'" (MV 100).

Even after joining politics on the advice of the Prime Minister, Jayaraman finds himself alienated from other members of the party. He does not behave as a typical politician because he is still searching for his identity. Not only from the members of the party but also from friends and relatives he is alienated. When he learns that Nalina, Sureka and
Joe have gone to Art Exhibition without inviting him, he “feels alienated from them” (MV 115). Sureka comments on his dilemma: “I have chosen painting. Joe and Nalina have a clear understanding of what they want. But you have not chosen politics. In fact, politics has chosen you. This is the main reason for all your problems” (MV 138).

Like Joseph’s dilemma which attains its full dimension at the end of DM, Jayaraman’s problem gets more complicated at the end of the novel. He has to take a decision whether to support injustice or to fight against corrupt forces and go to prison, satisfying his conscience” (MV 259). When he sees his image in the television, he feels he should destroy the screen of the television. “He has become a parrot, repeating the prepared lessons. He started his hunting of the illusory deer but has been prisoned within the electronic box, repeating mechanically the lessons without individuality and identity” (MV 260). The comparison between the mythical Ram and Jayaraman is apt here: “Rama who went after the illusory deer lost Sita; Jayaraman who searched for identity has lost himself” (MV 264).

Jayaraman finally understands that the search for identity in India is like hunting the illusory deer. At the end of the novel, he says to Sureka:

I want to forget everything as a bad dream. I like to live again those happy days of the past when we were together in “Vasantha Vihar.” Now I realize the value of the price I have given for my ambition. There is no meaning in anything in this world. Money, fame, patriotism and social service are
various forms of pretension by which we deceive ourselves. Have you read King Lear? Suffering in the midst of storm, Lear asks who he is. The Fool tells Lear that he is the shadow of King Lear. Yes. It is better to be a shadow than to experience the tragedy which we have to face when we walk on the stage in the world with pride and ambition. "A tale told by an idiot!" What a beautiful line! (MV 265-66).

Both Joseph and Jayaraman are "dangling" men but Jayaraman's problem is deeper and more complex than Joseph's. Both experience difficulty in making the choice in aligning themselves with one faction or another. Joseph's enlistment in the army at the end is a surrender of his principles and individuality but it is also the acceptance of the fundamental concept that lies at the basis of human existence.

Jayaraman's return to America at the end is described by his friend, Professor Hailey, as the "return of the prodigal son" (MV 281). But Jayaraman replies that he has not totally given up the idea of reforming the social set-up of his country. Both Joseph and Jayaraman insist upon identity and become alienated from friends and relatives.

An important motif that constitutes the theme of alienation in the novels of both Bellow and Parthasarathy is deformity or disease. In "Seven Images," Irving Malin explains how Bellow communicates most effectively his concerns through images: "These images are not odd or forced. They are 'natural;' they provide the 'scene' in which his characters live. They make us experience the pains of existence" (142). Deformity is one of the images used by Bellow in his novels.
In *Dangling Man*, Joseph, being alone ten hours a day in a single room, experiences "a narcotic dullness" (14). Vanaker, the neighbour, is "coughing wildly" (14). Joseph's father-in-law, old Almstadt, is unmanly and Mrs. Almstadt is worn out, trying to keep the house in order. Mrs. Kiefer, the landlady, suffers from paralysis. The crooking vein on Iva's temple, the hypnotized body of Minna, the sores and deformities of beggars, the gag in the mouth of Walter Farson's baby, the swollen lips and the helpless tongue of the man having a heart attack – all these deformities make Joseph realize that the body is crippled but not the will that should make a person continue his life in the world.

*The Victim* begins on a note of sickness. Asa Leventhal's nephew is bedridden. This illness is repeated throughout the novel. Mr. Beard has a face "enlarged by baldness" (2). Allbee's lower jaw is slipped to one side, his glum, contemplative eyes are filled with a green and leaden colour. Elena's mother resembles an ugly old witch. Asa has "unreliable nerves", an occasional tremor. He is not able to understand why there is so much disease and deformity among human beings. Like Joseph in *DM*, Asa is surrounded by deformity and disease and finds himself alienated. Irving Malin quotes Thomas Mann's words to explain Asa's predicament:

> The truth is that life has never been able to do without the morbid, and probably no adage is more inane than the one which says that "only disease can come from the diseased." Life is not prudish, and it is probably safe to say that life prefers creative, genius-bestowing disease a thousand times over to prosaic health; prefers disease, surmounting obstacles
Goli, who suffers from asthma, has always with him “a pump-set like machine for inhaling oxygen” (TB 34).

**Vēcaṅkal** deals powerfully with the theme of alienation caused by deformity. Sankaran’s right foot “was curved like a sitting squirrel” (6). Gopu’s deformity forms the basis of the novellete. His physical appearance is described thus: “A hunchback, two shoulders too close as if sharing a secret. The eyes and mouth as insignificant as a dot; a permanent nose; a long crooked face, resembling a shaken and distorted photograph” (5). The character of Gopu is the most complex of all the characters in **Vēcaṅkal**. Sankaran tries to understand his character with the help of Freudian theory (33). In an attempt to sublimate his frustrations, Gopu creates a hero in his imagination. Gopu’s mental agony is caused by his deformity which makes him prefer loneliness to company. Sankaran is always conscious of his deformity. When Sundaram says that he tries to pull him down referring to his inability to understand French, Sankaran says that “nobody needs to pull his legs down” (23) because they are at present in that condition. Sankaran thinks of “Stevenson, a writer of modern adventures, who was bedridden most of his life” (43). According to the *Encyclopaedia of Tamil Literature*: “In **Vēcaṅkal**, there is the stereotypical atmosphere of oedipal suppressions and prohibitions with the central character Sankaran remaining psychically diseased, confusing the womb that begets him with the womb that takes him in and recreates him” (Murugan 543). Gopu’s character attains its complexity because it is linked closely to Death. Gopu says to Sankaran: “I'm now sixteen years
old. The doctors have told me that I'll die at any moment. I have been waiting for death. I am a blue baby, it seems!” (45).

Manakukai is another novelette which focuses on alienation arising out of daughter-fixation. Kesavan, who reads Goethe’s Faust, is not able to maintain a healthy relationship with his wife and suffers from daughter-fixation. The Encyclopaedia of Tamil Literature points out how in Manakukai and Vēcaṅkaḷ, Parthasarathy has made a conscious attempt at bringing in the psycho-analytic theories of the West: “In Manakukai, the protagonist Kesavan does seem to have an abnormal attachment to his emotionally vibrant daughter, and the movement of the plot of this novel is dictated by the psychological complexities attendant on this daughter-fixation. The novelist insistently focuses our attention on the unnamed, unacknowledgable fantasies and illusions that remain in the subconscious mind of the protagonist” (Murugan 543). Raghu, who comes to meet Nirmala in her house, develops confrontation with her and suspects whether “the whole family suffers from hysteria” (107).

Unam, a novelette included in the book Vēcaṅkaḷ, focuses on the mental anguish arising out of deformity. The word “Unam” means deformity. The physical appearance of Babu is described at the beginning of the novelette: “He must be ten or twelve years old. His head was flat like a sheet of molten metal. His round, big eyes were protruding out of his face as though they wanted to see the world fully. His small nose compensated for the protrusion of the eyes. His mouth was broad and big reaching out his ears as if it wanted to lament the injustice meted out by nature. He was staring into nothingness” (116).
In HKI, sterility is an important factor that causes alienation in Tilagam. Even after twelve years of married life, Amirtham and Tilagam do not have a child and the fact of sterility makes their life meaningless. In Tilagam’s opinion, Amirtham does not behave as a normal human being. She says to him: “You are indifferent to or dislike whatever I adore most. All the time you sit like a silent hermit, reading books. Whenever I ask you to take me out for having some entertainment, you simply accompany me like a goat going to the altar for sacrifice. You don’t show any kind of happiness or enthusiasm in coming with me” (HKI 6). These words of Tilagam indicate the widening gap between husband and wife.

KP focuses on the impotency of Kanniah Naidu who is mainly responsible for the clash between landlords and peasants. This character becomes highly complex because of the psychological aberrations emerging from the consciousness of deformity.

TA shows the dark complexion of the main character Booma as an important factor that causes her estrangement from her husband who hates her colour. Sterility wreaks a havoc on the life of the Jains. Jain “suffers from schizophrenia” (TA 109) and is admitted in All India Medical Institute for treatment.

An alienated person, in the opinion of Feuer, acts self-destructively. Damodaran in VTK is an example to show how the emotional tone leads a person to self-destruction. When Ramachandran asks him whether boredom is the main reason for his becoming a great artist, Damodaran says: “Look at me. You can draw cartoons of people with normal structure. How will you picturize me? If you draw a cartoon and make an attempt to
show my structure beautifully, that will be highly ridiculous. Have you read Omar Khayam? The flaw found in the thing made by the Potter—I am this flaw! I should have killed myself or I should have committed murder after murder like Richard III. Is any other reason necessary for the existence of boredom and meaninglessness in my life?” (VTK 37). Before committing suicide, Damodaran thinks about art and the artist: “The secret of art is self-oblivion. Every picture is my new manifestation. Art is the real thing. The artist is only an instrument. Damodaran, a short crooked hunchback, looking as a person carrying a heavy sack, can impress others by his wonderful art. This is the most important thing. Damodaran is just an illusion, but his art is real and everlasting” (VTK 176). Damodaran is always conscious of his deformity which creates in him the sense of loneliness: “Being all alone at midnight and looking at the sky when the whole world is at rest I am able to understand the intensity of loneliness which I can’t avoid in my life” (VTK 153). Radhika is another character who suffers from alienation. Her mental sickness is caused by such factors as “the betrayal of a run away husband, a son without an iota of love for his mother, a life with another guilt conscious person and a daily quota of whisky” (VTK 157).

Parthasarathy’s Tivukal needs a special focus in this chapter because the theme of alienation is presented in this novel in its full dimension. The title “Tivukal” means “Islands.” Every character in the novel is alienated because of personal and social factors. Parthasarathy shows how an indifferent materialistic society causes havoc in the life of the individual. The novel depicts how alienation has increased in spite of
technological advancements in the fields of communication and transport, which have transformed the vast and wide world of the yesteryears to the global village of today. Though the physical distance has been drastically reduced, the erection of mental barriers has isolated man from his fellow beings. The giant step in information technology has made communication faster and easier even to the remotest corners of the world. But an open communication without inhibitions has become a Herculean task for the modern individual. Many sophisticated homes consist only of human islands under the same roof. The higher the educational status and economic prosperity the greater is its toll.

In *Tivukal*, Parthasarathy portrays the sense of alienation experienced by the members of the Kapoor family in Delhi. Life in Delhi, as in any other city, is full of problems and has become mechanical, isolated and meaningless. There is no much personal contact in families. Husband and wife hardly share each other's concerns, ideas, experiences and problems, having been separated for most of the day in their offices. Parents and children, too, suffer from this lack of intimacy and personal touch, to a large extent. Kapoor, an economic consultant for industries, is married to Mohini, a rich lady by birth. Mohini with her varied complexes makes life miserable for her husband and children. Her family of three sons, of whom two are married, a widowed daughter Swarna, and the youngest unmarried daughter Anjali, point an accusing finger at Mohini for turning home into a hell.

Mohini, a megalomaniac, has never been kind to any of her children. Kapoor recollects an incident that brings into focus the idea that
the child who receives an inhuman treatment is affected psychologically and that the psychological damage done to the child is irrevocable: “When he was about ten years old, Satheesh was locked alone at night as a sort of punishment for spoiling an expensive suit of one of their guests during a party at home. He drew himself into a shell, remained a rock, mute to his mother’s psychological aberrations. Now as a young man, he has found refuge in alcohol” (Tivukal 28). Satheesh has also become a rebel. He retaliates to his mother’s mad fits of anger. He holds her responsible for his failure in life. In one of the encounters with his mother, he outpours his anger: “I know all about you. It was you who spoiled my life. Right from my childhood, your excessive, abnormal control has made me a good-for-nothing person. Aren’t you satisfied even now? Did you get me married just to see me die of disgrace every minute? Are you a human being?” (Tivukal 73). It is a pity that a promising intelligent young man like Satheesh turns an alcoholic because of his inability to tolerate the inhuman treatment given to him by his mother.

Kapoor, the highly successful consultant considers himself a victim of money and status. His inferiority complex torments him and he remains passive even when Mohini pricks at his ego. Kapoor is respected as “a highly learned person, a genius and a connoisseur of arts. But in the company of Mohini, he is mute and submissive like a snake inside the box” (Tivukal 16). He lives a life of detachment. He feels guilty for having neglected his old father. Kapoor is not able to find an answer to the pertinent question whether he is a coward or not. He fears he has killed his real self in the rat-race of the modern world: “Only men who have
destroyed their soul can climb the social ladder successfully in the self
defensive economic struggle of today. I am afraid that my soul has been
buried in a corner of my bungalow” (Tivuka4 24). In one of his
conversations with Vijaya, the servant-maid turned secretary, Kapoor
comments on the false pretensions of the rich people: “In a money-
oriented society the little comforts that can be bought with money are
considered the values of life and this is a weakness equivalent to self
destruction. Man weaves a web of necessities and at a point of time is
enmeshed and imprisoned in it. Only when it becomes irretrievable, he
realizes that what has been done is foolish and futile. I am now a self-
imprisoned man” (Tivuka4 166).

It is only when Mohini in one of her fits of anger tries to strangle
him, Kapoor decides to divorce her. He wishes to live his life to the lees
and develops the relationship with Shameen, a ghazal singer. His hatred
for Mohini is evident when he blabbers that he has murdered Mohini. He
wishes to proclaim to the world that he is no more a victim.

Swarna, the eldest daughter of the Kapoors, is a widow, who has her
own share of hatred for her mother. She is not able to look after her
daughter Ruby and so she requests Vijaya to take care of the child.
Swarna pours out her uncontrolled anger on Mohini: “I was never
interested in marrying Ruby’s father. My mother did not permit me to
marry the man I loved. This marriage was a forced one. The groom was
known to my mother. So I was compelled to get married. Now I’m happy...
because Nature has taken revenge on my mother. I’m now independent.
She can never question my whereabouts. I'll kill her; Yes, I'll kill her" (Tivukal 17-18).

It is interesting to note how both Parthasarathy and Anita Desai present the theme of the necessity of a “good” mother in their novels. The idea of a “good” mother and a “bad” mother is a world-wide phenomenon. In the Indian context a good mother not only satisfies the physical needs of her child but also supports the child when there are emotional complexities. The alienation of Swarna in Tivukal and that of Sita in Where Shall We Go This Summer? spring from the absence of a “good” mother. In Where Shall We Go This Summer? the mother deserts the family and goes to Benaras. The motherless childhood creates a sense of loss in Sita’s life. Her mental agony increases when she learns that her mother is not dead but has run away to Benaras: “Run away? And left us? Sita stood clutching her hair about her ears and feet sinking rapidly into the sand. Then she shook her head and let her hair all come loose and stamped her foot so that one footprint in the silder sand was deeper than all the others...” (83). The tragedy is that this truth is revealed to Sita when she is an adolescent. Mother is indispensable for girls during the adolescent period. It is more difficult for an adolescent to accept a deserter mother than a mother dead and lost for ever. The essential similarity between Sita and Swarna is that both of them fail to internalise womanhood because of the absence of a “good” mother. This failure, which creates a sense of loss and alienation in their lives is the main reason why they suffer from emotional disturbances when they themselves
become mothers. They cannot nurture their children only because of this failure.

All the psychological disturbances in the household make Anjali, the youngest daughter, develop an aversion for money and long for peace and happiness at home. “I'd never wish even my enemies to be born in rich families. Where there is money, there is no family. Each and every member becomes a separate island keeping a distance of thousands of miles from the other” (Tivukal 176).

Thus, Parthasarathy shows in Tivukal how life has become so fast, complex and hectic in big cities like Delhi that the individual no longer feels safe and secure. Man has lost the sense of belonging and identity, and suffers from estrangement and rootlessness. Madonna Kolbenschlag's views on alienation discussed earlier in this chapter attain greater significance in this context. Tivukal shows how the members belonging to a rich family suffer from estrangement and sense of loss. The family in Delhi, as in other metropolitan cities, has lost its identity and value as a social unit and foundation of the society. The impersonal attitude of the urban society has given rise to individual isolation, anonymity and loneliness. The character of Kapoor is an example to show that the individual in an urban society feels like a tiny and insecure island in the fast current of life in the post-war world.

Alienation is an important theme in Bellow’s HRK and Parthasarathy’s AT. There are many striking similarities between Henderson and Dhruv. Both are alienated wanderers in search for identity and selfhood. Both decide to find redemption not in civilization but in the
primal state. Henderson goes to a totally isolated region in East Africa while Dhruv decides to work in the fields of a remote village in Madhya Pradesh. Both begin as alienatees, undergo the ordeal of suffering through various experiences, and achieve maturity and calmness at the end.

Eugene Henderson, the fifty five year old American millionaire, who is haunted by the inner voice, "I want, I want," is an alienated person. He finds that his life is one of chaos: "The facts begin to crowd me and soon I get a pressure in the chest. A disorderly rush begins—my parents, my wives, my girls, my children, my farm, my animals, my habits, my money, my music lessons, my drunkenness, my prejudices, my brutality, my teeth, my face, my soul... They are mine. And they pile into me from all sides. It turns into chaos" (HRK 3). Henderson cannot find an answer to his problem within the framework of the American society and so he begins his journey in the hope of meeting an African Messiah.

Judie Newman points out how the psychological theme of HRK is linked to a larger context:

Henderson is alienated because he is living in an eternal present in which the past does not exist and everyone is always a stranger. This alienation, in part a personal psychological disturbance, is also that of a culture alienated from its origins, living in the expectation of immediate salvation in a new world... He typifies the American belief in the ability to wipe out the past and begin again in a new world where salvation from inherited guilt is a product of salvation from inherited tradition and history. (16)
Henderson’s desire to escape morality results in the desecration of religious and cultural inheritances. It is seen in his decision to breed pigs in the ancestral home at Monte Cassino, where a monument of the European past was destroyed by U.S. troops. He tries to get consolation in the prophecy made by Daniel to Nebuchadnezzar: "Anyway I was a pig man. And as the prophet Daniel warned King Nebuchadnezzar, They shall drive thee from among men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field" (HRK 21). Alienated and disillusioned, Henderson finds no meaning in his life and fails to maintain healthy relationship within his family and in his neighbourhood. He was deprived of his father’s love in his childhood and this deprivation is one of the causes of his alienation.

Henderson knows very well that his life is a mess. His physical appearance is also of an abnormal size. Henderson narrates: "At birth I weighed fourteen pounds, and it was a tough delivery. Then I grew up. Six feet four inches tall. Two hundred and thirty pounds. An enormous head, rugged, with hair like Persian lambs’ fur. Suspicious eyes usually narrowed. Blustering ways. A great nose" (4). When it is time to marry, Henderson chooses Frances who is "a schizophrenic" (4). Henderson is also considered crazy because he is "moody, rough, tyrannical, and probably mad" (4). They live together for twenty years and have five children. Soon after he comes back from the war, Frances and Henderson are divorced. His second wife is called Lily and they have twin boys. Nevertheless, Henderson is not able to lead a peaceful life with Lily. He compares Frances and Lily: "... I gave Lily a terrible time, worse than Frances. Frances was withdrawn, which protected her, but Lily caught it..."
Whenever Frances didn't like what I was doing, and that was often, she turned away from me. She was like Shelley's moon, wandering companionless. Not so Lily; and I raved at her in public and swore at her in private" (5). Henderson cannot adjust himself not only with his wives but also with his neighbours. He gets into brawls in the country saloons near his farm and is locked up by the troopers. He has a fight with the vet over one of his pigs, and another with the driver of a snowplow on US 7 when the driver tries to force him off the road. Falling off tractor while drunk and running himself over, he breaks his leg. For months he is on crutches, hitting everyone who crosses his path, "man or beast, and giving Lily hell" (5). Henderson's activities start some crisis in Lily's mind. She starts to cry, and when Henderson sees tears he yells: I'm going to blow my brains out! I'm shooting myself. I didn't forget to pack the pistol. I've got it on me now" (7). Henderson's words make Lily run away because her father had committed suicide in that same way, with a pistol. Like many absurd heroes, Henderson views suicide as a salvation from the sufferings in life, but suicide must be rejected as a denial of one of the most important conditions of the absurd confrontation. Henderson's suicide threat to Lily comes to an end with a strange experience in the aquarium during his visit to Banyules on the Vermilion Coast.

Henderson's journey to Africa gives him an opportunity to divert his mind and put an end to the chaos. But it is not merely the change of place that brings him consolation; it is the quest that will enable him to realize the absurdity of existence and the real meaning of the shift from "I want"
Henderson’s quest for redemption is similar to Dhruv’s. Like Henderson’s “I want, I want,” Dhruv’s longing for meaning in life alienates him from community. Like Henderson, Dhruv discards the life of pleasure in search of values. He feels alienated in the social circle which consists of shrewd politicians and dishonest middlemen. He stops abruptly the wonderful music he plays on the veena, causing an insult to the minister, because he considers the minister a symbol of corruption in society. He knows very well that the minister has been indulging in kickbacks, money laundering and other dishonest ways of earning money. As he is in search for moral values, he cannot mingle with corrupt politicians who have become millionaires overnight through wrong means.

Dhruv seems to be an enigma not only to his mother but also to Sandhya and Komalam. “When he was six years old he became the Chess Champion of Delhi. He played his final game on the day he became the Champion. After that day he stopped playing chess. He studied Engineering Course but discontinued his studies in the final year of the course. He also learnt computer, car mechanism and classical music. Whenever he played on the veena, he produced wonderful music but every concert ended in chaos because he used to stop his music abruptly, irritating the audience” (AT 8-10). Manjula cannot understand why her son behaves like this and so she comes to the conclusion that “he is his own problem” (14).

Dhruv is an intellectual trapped in ordinary circumstances. In Moorthy’s opinion, “he is an erratic genius” (AT 21). Dhruv’s father advises Manjula to take care of Dhruv because “he is a prodigy” (9). When
Raghu asks him why he stops abruptly his musical performance, Dhruv says: "I get suddenly a kind of frustration or hopelessness which emerges when I realize that I can't continue my journey because I've reached the blind alley. I want to break this invisible door to reach the road to heaven. I know this is impossible. That is why I'm frustrated" (45-46).

Like Henderson, Dhruv causes havoc in the family circle. Being a sensitive person and genius, Dhruv has been affected by the physical world of man's environment which stands contradictory to his expectations. Symptomatic of his loneliness and sense of loss are the emotions and attitudes of despair, anger, an almost masochistic preoccupation with the sordid, disgust, belief in absurdity, and an anguished humanism following from the awareness of human predicament. The artificial behaviour of human beings who live in big cities, the dishonest ways of corrupt people who enjoy power and wealth, and the traumatic experiences of urbanization have done much towards the distortion of fine sensibilities of individuals like Dhruv. The relationship between Dhruv and his mother has become bitter because she is always immersed in the business world. The growth of large cities like Delhi and of industries began a long time back, but in the twentieth century the process was much accelerated which in turn destroyed the uniqueness of the individual. Trapped in the busy routine life of big cities, man has grown reflexes to conform to standardized patterns. This idea is effectively presented in AT and Tivukal.

Komalam, who comes into Dhruv's life from a poverty-stricken family, is not an intellectual and so she cannot rise to the level of Dhruv.
The conflict between husband and wife in the first night focuses on the complexity in Dhruv's character:

"Which raga do you like most?"

"I don't know anything about ragas."

"If you like a film song, try to sing the song."

"I sing only when I take bath."

"Right. Think that you're taking bath now."

She was full of emotions and head the desire to embrace him.

She lay on his lap. Immediately he pushed her away and said:

"Get out" (95-96).

On another occasion when Komalam asks Dhruv what he likes most besides playing the veena, Dhruv replies: "I've been searching for what I like most. Playing the veena is also an attempt to reach the goal. If I have to say the truth, I'd say that Death is the thing which I like most. I must go on searching for values. Satisfaction means death" (102). Komalam is not able to understand the thought processes in Dhruv's mind and finally she commits suicide. The sheer agony and horror of a world from where humanism is slowly losing its ground, and where all is flux and absurd, finds expression in AT.

Thus both HRK and AT portray modern man's feeling of insecurity and alienation which in turn engage him in search for his identity. Both Henderson and Dhruv are the modern versions of Don Quixote, the dissatisfied idealist longing to transform himself and the world into something better and more meaningful than what it is now.
complex post-modern environment. This intention is not fulfilled because of the harsh reality that exists in the materialistic society.

The conversation between Dhruv and Sandhya at the end of the novel suggests the real meaning of happiness:

"What are you doing now?"

"I'm working in the fields in a remote village in Madhya Pradesh. My physical appearance shows it to you."

"Do you like what you're doing now?"

"I'd also want to know whether you like what you're doing now."

Sandhya was silent.

"I believe that there is meaning only in this silence." (214)

Sandhya has tried to establish a Utopian colony in which the inhabitants should be honest people helping one another. But the attempt becomes a failure. All the corrupt practices prevailing in the society are also found in these people. When Dhruv asks Sandhya whether she is happy at present, she does not reply in positive. But Dhruv has attained a philosophical quietness of mind that enables him to realize the meaning of the absurdity of life. What Bree says about the conclusion of Camus's "The Myth of Sisyphus" suits well the conclusion of AT:

Whatever facet of the problem we consider, the essay leads, nevertheless, to one conclusion: life is infinitely valuable to the individual; only by a clear consciousness of the given data of life can the individual reach happiness; happiness, at heart, can only be tragic. The absurd human being is by
the post-war world man has become an island because of the walls of incommunication that exist among human beings. Dhruv's problem is that he is unable to relate his experiences to the world outside, unable to integrate within the decontextualized impressions received from without. When Dhruv stands before the corpse of his wife Komalam, he gets a sordid picture of the world which resembles the picture presented in Edward Albee's *The Zoo Story* in which Jerry, who experiences the existential anguish of alienation, says to Peter, a conformist representative of the American middle-class: "Don't you see a person has to have some way of dealing with something. If not with people... if not with people... something. With a bed, with a cockroach, with a mirror... no that's too hard, that's one of the last steps. With a cockroach, with a ...with a ...with a carpet, with a roll of toilet paper... no, not that, either... with a wisp of smoke... with ...with pornographic playing cards, with a strongbox... without a lock... with love, with vomiting, with crying, with fury because the pretty little ladies aren't pretty little ladies, with making love with your body which is an act of love and I could prove it, with howling because you are alive..." (42-43). The dilemma experienced by both Jerry and Dhruv evokes convincingly the universal human condition which shows how man has been let loose in a world of chaos where his desire to lead a meaningful life is frustrated.

The existential alienation of Jerry in *The Zoo Story* has a close parallel to that of Damodaran in *VTK* and to that of Nirmala in *NN*. In Jerry's view, both society and the entire human situation are as frustrating as his image of the zoo. Everyone is separated from everyone
else by bars. The cages are those of the conventions and norms that exist in society. Jerry's unsuccessful attempt to establish contact with the landlady's ferocious dog denotes a concrete existentialist experience. Jerry gives hamburgers to the dog to express his love and then gives him poison to kill him, both of which fail. On recovery, the dog gives a long stare to Jerry which indicates a point of contact, but then withdraws altogether allowing Jerry his lonely way of continuing his journey. This incident makes Jerry realize that a fusion of love and hate is the only teaching emotion. On his way back from the zoo, Jerry makes his last attempt at human communication in his conversation with Peter, who has been living a complacent life, having a comfortable home, the average number of children and the right status expected in the middle-class society. Peter occupies a bench in Central Park on a Sunday afternoon to read his book, thinking that he has got a safe private corner, his bourgeois property. Jerry approaches him suddenly and practises his love-hate technique. The conversation begins with some personal questions including a few uncomfortable ones and ends in an open fight between Jerry and Peter. Finally Jerry deliberately thrusts himself on the knife Peter is made to hold out in self-defence. Peter is shocked and is made to come out of his habitual bourgeois complacency. Jerry's aim is to make Peter realize the absurdity of existence. Jerry's suicide brings forcefully an existential experience to Peter, who will never forget the absurd fact that he has involuntarily killed a man.

In *VTK*, Damodaran commits suicide, after his conversation with Vimmi. Damodaran's frustration stems from his consciousness of his ugly
and horrible physical appearance, and from the fact that he has never had sexual experience in life. Vimmi's rejection at the end of her conversation with Damodaran has created an existential experience which Vimmi will never forget in her life. The end of the novel describes the complex thoughts going on in the mind of Vimmi: "Is it a desert? Sand, sand everywhere... Would there be pebbles? Someone has said that he is gathering pebbles. But pebbles are found on the seashore. This is not the seashore... Desert... Sand... Sand... As minute particles... Shining in the daylight. Who are these people? Strange faces. No difference between one face and the other. What are they doing? My God! I'm also doing the same thing" (VTK 182). Damodaran's suicide creates an existential awareness in Vimmi. The common point between The Zoo Story and VTK is that one human consciousness impinges on another only at the cost of a life. Jerry's suicide brings existential awareness to Peter, and Damodaran's suicide gives Vimmi a terrifying existential experience.

NN presents this theme in a convincing manner through the character of Nirmala. The love-hate relationship between Nirmala and her father, Hariharan, alienates her from others, and she suffers from an existential loneliness. As Jerry in The Zoo Story destroys the middle-class complacency of Peter, Nirmala makes Samuel realize the facts of isolation and sense of loss. The fact that Nirmala had sex with him immediately after the death of her father creates horror in Samuel's mind and he has to live with an awareness of the contingent nature of life.

The treatment of the theme of alienation in AT finds a parallel in Richard Wright's The Outsider. The essential similarity between
Parthasarathy and Wright is that both the writers, as they have learnt more about existentialism, feel that the important tenets of existentialism should form the basis of creative process. Wright first met Sartre during the latter's visit to the United States in 1946. Later he met Camus and Simone de Beauvoir. He wrote The Outsider in 1953. The protagonist of the novel, Cross Damon, is a thinking man, facing the complexities of the twentieth-century life. At the beginning of the novel, Damon is described as a person who wants to forget the separation from his wife, Gladys and three children. He drinks heavily against the protests from his friends and co-workers at the post-office. He finds himself placed in a situation that has become extremely difficult for him to manage because of his involvement with a fifteen-year old girl, Dot, who is pregnant by him. Dot wants Damon to marry her but he cannot fulfill her desire because his wife Gladys refuses to release him in a divorce. She threatens him with an initiative to take legal action against him for rape and assault. The early pages of the novel describe the sufferings of man in the universe. Cross Damon asks a series of questions: "Why were some people, fated, like Job, to live a never-ending debate between themselves and their sense of what they believed life should be? Why did some hearts feel insulted at being alive, humiliated at the terms of existence?" (The Outsider 19). Damon's activities have shocked his mother, who forces him to solve the problem quickly. In course of time Damon develops the ability to identify the alienated people, the outsiders—Ely Houston, a hunchback, women and non-whites in general, prostitutes and other estranged people.
The existentialist theme of freedom is clearly presented in *The Outsider* and *AT*. In existentialist terms, there could not be a greater possibility to have the freedom to make a choice when there are no limits. Dhruv gets this freedom after his wife's death. Damon is given this freedom when he is returning with eight hundred dollars which he has borrowed from the Postal Union. Gladys has forced him to borrow the money so as to clear the titles of the house and the car, which should be handed over to her. He is involved in a subway accident and later learns from a radio announcement that he is officially dead because he has been mistaken for another fellow passenger. But the freedom given to Damon and Dhruv involves the problem of choice and responsibility. Both Damon and Dhruv have to experience what Kierkegaard says as “the dizziness of freedom, what occurs when freedom looks down into its own possibility” (Macquarrie 54). The dizziness of freedom brings with it loneliness and existential alienation.

The existential anguish experienced by Damon after killing his old friend Joe Thomas is similar to that of Dhruv after his wife's suicide: “He was empty, face to face with a sense of dread more intense than anything he had ever felt before. He was alone... Nothing made meaning; his life seemed to have turned into a static dream whose frozen images would remain unchanged throughout eternity” (*The Outsider* 101). The total loneliness of the protagonist in an indifferent universe is emphasized in both *The Outsider* and *AT*. Nevertheless, the essential difference between the two novels is that *The Outsider* makes use of violence, reflecting the black American situation whereas in *AT* there is restraint in the use of
violence and the focus is on Dhruv's mental agony. After he has left Delhi, Dhruv settles in a remote village in Madhya Pradesh, gaining a philosophical mood and quietness of mind. But Damon, after he moves to New York, kills Herndon, the fascist landlord, and Blount, whose wife Eva has a great attraction for him. Joe Thomas' murder is for purely practical reason because Damon thinks that Joe may tell others about his survival, but the killing of Herndon and Blount is a matter of deliberate choice which makes the universe rush at him "with all its totality. He was anchored once again in life, in the flow of things; the world glowed with an intensity so sharp it made his body ache... He knew exactly what he had done; he had done it deliberately even though he had not planned it" (The Outsider 227). Like Herzog, both Damon and Dhruv are victims and victimizers.

Not only in AT but also in most of his other novels, Parthasarathy presents the important tenets of existentialism through characterization, plot, and narration. Having been exposed to the Western philosophy, particularly to the existentialist thought, Parthasarathy expresses his ideas based on existentialism through fictionalized experience. In his interview with Joseph Albert, Parthasarathy states that he believes in man's freedom of choice and responsibility: "I do agree with the view that I have been influenced by existential philosophy. I have read so much of it. And existentialism is nothing new. Though we give the name, "existentialism," and all that, the problems are always there. And how to decide this problem is a problem. But it is the action which decides the thing. Again I like to point out the dilemma experienced by Arjuna in the
battlefield. It is the action which determines the situation" (Albert 240-41).

Parthasarathy's novels are thematically based on the depths of human sufferings and existential alienation of human psyche. The Western philosophy and Freudian psycho-analysis have influenced him to a great extent and therefore he presents the complex facts of human existence in his novels through the psychic tensions of his characters. According to Encyclopaedia of Tamil Literature: "Freudianism and other psycho-analytic theories of the West have a more widespread, more decisive influence on Tamil novelistic conception... there are novelists like Indira Parthasarathy and Kiruthica who have made attempts at informing one aspect or other of the psycho-analytic theories of the West" (Samuel and Murugan 512). Parthasarathy's prime concern is human relationship and his main theme is humanistic existentialism.

In a world of industrialization, socialization, and generalization, the importance of uniqueness, the purely personal aspect that enables man to view life as a series of emotional intensities is stressed by Parthasarathy in his novels. He presents in his art the idea that personal intensity involves a logic different from that of the rational world. Most of his novels reflect the Freudian view of the unconscious as the pure psychic reality. He shows a stark, existential picture of life in his novels and focuses on the depth of human anxiety and despair about meaninglessness, fate, death and emptiness. The turmoil of a whole generation is described in his novels, which portray the feelings of loneliness, estrangement and sense of
loss which are the direct outcome of the individual's quest for meaning and identity.

Parthasarathy thinks of man in relation to social system. It is not man as an individual alone that concerns him but man in his social order—disillusioned and despairing because of the norms of an indifferent society—becomes his subject. The disillusionment of man emerges because his intention does not coincide with reality that exists in society. From \textbf{TB} to \textbf{AT}, Parthasarathy presents the confrontation between intention and reality. He believes that human nature is too complex to be described by using one single formula. Here he disagrees with Hegel and stresses through his characters that a universal human nature is only a myth and that it is very difficult to arrive at a commonly accepted metaphysical picture of man.

While emphasizing the nature of an indifferent society as a factor leading to the alienation of man, Parthasarathy never fails to present the idea that alienation is also an asocial aspect. In sociological terms, alienation indicates rootlessness and estrangement; in existential terms, alienation is mainly from the self. As Kumkum Sangari observes: "Alienation as a sociological category is a historical phenomenon susceptible to change, but as an existential category it is axiomatic, becoming almost the quintessence of human nature" (163). Parthasarathy presents both sociological alienation and existential alienation in his novels.

Alienation caused by the psychological complexity in man-woman relationship is the main theme of Parthasarathy's \textbf{VTK}. The predicament
of Vimmi in VTK invites comparison with that of Maya in Anita Desai's **Cry, the Peacock**. Though the alienation experienced by Vimmi is not so forceful as that felt by Maya, the cry for identity and independence is the common point between the two characters. While Maya is obsessed with fear, Vimmi suffers from boredom and loneliness. The husband-wife relationship becomes meaningless in both the novels because the emotional response of the husband is just the opposite of the wife. While Maya longs for involvement, Gautama wants detachment. While Vimmi sees everything from artistic point of view, Arun judges everything by materialistic standards. While Maya and Vimmi are highly sensitive and emotional, Gautama and Arun are practical and businesslike. In both the novels, while the action progresses, the gap in communication between the husband and the wife widens.

The opening pages of **Cry, the Peacock** show the hypersensitive nature of Maya. She is shocked at the untimely death of her pet dog and rushes to the garden tap "to wash the vision from her eyes" (15). But Gautama remains unaffected by the incident. The incompatibility of the temperaments of the young couple becomes the main cause for alienation and estrangement.

As the title indicates, **Cry, the Peacock** is about Maya's cry for love and identity. The peacock's cry is symbolic of Maya's mental anguish. Maya, the daughter of an aristocratic Brahmin of Lucknow, feels alienated even before marriage because her mother was dead and her brother has gone to America seeking his independence. Her situation is similar to that of Nirmala in **NN**. Nirmala's alienation and loneliness are caused by her
mother's death and her brother Raghu's separation from her. The
important point that puts both Maya and Nirmala on the same level is
that both suffer from father-fixation. Both are highly sensitive and
emotional to the point of being neurotic persons.

Maya suffers from a premonition about the tragic end of her
marriage. She is made to believe that either she or her husband would die
in the fourth year of marriage. The opening of the novel shows that Maya's
marriage with Gautama is running in its fourth year. The tragedy is that
Maya, like Vimmi in VTK is not able to relate her fear to her husband
because of the communication gap and lack of understanding. As M.
Rajeshwar says: "Maya expects some emotional and physical satisfaction
in married life but both of them are denied to her, one by Gautama's cold
intellectuality and the other by his age" (241). Maya and Gautama do not
share anything at emotional level. Like Arun, Gautama is engrossed in his
activities, ignoring the feelings and longing of Maya. His coldness alienates
her and she suffers from loneliness: "How little he knew my suffering, or of
how to comfort me... Telling me to go to sleep while he worked at his
papers, he did not give another thought to me, to either the soft willing
body, or the lonely wanting mind that waited near his bed" (9). By
marrying a man twice her age, Maya feels that her interest and attitude
are totally opposite to those of her husband. Like the peacock that has
knowledge of life and death, Maya, "a creature of instincts" (16) suffers
from the fear of death: "I am in love and I am dying. God, let me sleep,
forget, rest. But no, I'll never sleep again. There is no rest anymore—only
death and waiting" (98). At night when Maya looks at the sky, she is
frightened by the dark spaces between the stars: “Death lurked in those spaces, the darkness spoke of distance, separation, loneliness” (24). Though the prediction of the albino priest plays a very important role in the turmoil felt by Maya, it cannot be denied that the mental make-up of Maya brings destruction to her. Purvi N. Upadhyay correctly says: “… it is proper to comment here that Maya is not very clear in her mind about the outcome of the prediction in that she does not know who will be the victim out of the two… Rebuffed by her husband and badly mauled by society, Maya is torn between her love of life and her fear of death” (52). Suddenly Maya thinks that it may be Gautama and not she whose life is threatened. She develops schizophrenia and describes herself as “a body without a heart, a heart without a body” (196). She kills her husband in a fit of madness. Later she jumps off the balcony of her ancestral house in Lucknow and dies.

As said earlier, the dimension of alienation felt by Maya differs from that of Vimmi. Though both the characters suffer from an emotional crisis, Vimmi does not go to the extreme level. She deserts her husband and goes to the house of Damodaran, being fed up with the artificial atmosphere at home and in the social circle in which she is forced to smile and talk with her husband’s friends. She feels alienated because Arun needs only physical satisfaction from her. He ignores totally her involvement in art and her talents. He wants her to be a mere doll, attending the dinner parties (VTK 8). But she is interested in literature and painting (VTK 35). Damodaran tells her that she has come out of the narrow artificial circle created by her husband because “she has got an inherent quality that
avoids boredom. Siddhartha became Buddha mainly to avoid boredom in his life. Man writes, paints and sings to escape the world of boredom" (VTK 36). Nevertheless, her relationship with Damodaran ends in the latter's suicide. Damodaran becomes the Reality Instructor to Vimmi. The end of the novel has a highly suggestive description of what is going on in the inner world of Vimmi. It indicates hallucination emerging from mental anguish.

Like Vimmi and Damodaran in VTK and Dhruv in AT, Asa Leventhal in The Victim is a solitary figure, burdened by a constant struggle against the world. He is deeply sensitive, and alienated. He suffers from a guilt complex. In the words of Jonathan Baumbach: "Leventhal, a victim of real and imaginary persecution, feels guilty because he believes that his suffering, like all suffering, is deserved yet he cannot recognize his own mortal sin," (51). At the beginning of the novel, Leventhal's ordinariness is described. He works as an editor for the Manhattan firm of Burke-Beard and Co., having the middle-income status. His formal education and manners are limited. As the story develops, he becomes the representative of the inner-city dwellers who suffer from paranoia arising out of the fear of failure.

Leventhal's conflict with Kirby Allbee, a former commercial journalist, forms the focus of the novel. These two characters become the "doubles" in the conventional manner. Leventhal is a Jew, Allbee is a gentile. Leventhal is dark, Allbee is fair. Leventhal is the child of Russian-Jewish immigrants, Allbee is descended from old American stock. Leventhal considers the world hostile but believes that one has control
over one’s destiny to some extent. Allbee also considers the world hostile but feels that one has no control over his destiny. Allbee’s anti-Semitism becomes an important factor in the relationship between the two characters. When Leventhal says that a woman does not leave her husband for anything, Allbee points out the difference between a Jew and a gentile: “You’re a true Jew, Leventhal. You have the true horror of drink. We’re the sons of Belial to you, we smell of whisky worse than of sulphur. When Noah lies drunk—you remember that story?—his gentile-minded sons have a laugh at the old man, but his Jewish son is horrified. There’s truth in that story. It’s a true story” (The Victim 67). Allbee accuses Leventhal for losing his job because Leventhal insulted Allbee’s employer in an interview which Allbee had arranged for him. Allbee also holds Leventhal responsible for his divorce and the subsequent death of his wife in a road accident. As Leventhal developed conflict with Allbee’s employer, Rudiger, Allbee was dismissed, and as he could not find a job, his wife left him. So he puts the blame for his wife’s death on Leventhal: “You try to put all the blame on me, but you know it’s true that you’re to blame. You and you only. For everything. You ruined me. Ruined! Because that’s what I am, ruined! You’re the one that’s responsible. You did it to me deliberately, out of hate. Out of pure hate!” (The Victim 68). Allbee comes into Leventhal’s life again and again, arriving at Leventhal’s apartment without invitation, meeting him at the zoo and visiting his office, causing an embarrassment to him. Leventhal rejects Allbee’s accusations but has an unconscious awareness that the accusations may have some truth in them. When Allbee
points out that Leventhal's behaviour with Rudiger is a revenge Leventhal has wanted to take for an anti-Semitic remark made by Allbee at a party, Leventhal is not able to deny the charge. So he is forced to help Allbee and talks to Williston who knows of the incident with Allbee's employer. But Williston tells Leventhal that Allbee's employer, Rudiger, thought that he had been sent deliberately by Allbee to insult him. So Williston feels that Leventhal has a moral obligation to help Allbee.

With an intention to make amends for his action, Leventhal allows Allbee to move into his apartment for a short period. But Allbee abuses this hospitality by bringing a woman into the room while Leventhal is out. Though it is Allbee's mistake, Leventhal feels as if he had committed an adulterous act. Bellow suggests this point in a subtle way by making Leventhal think of Mrs. Nunez. When Leventhal rushes into the front room, he sees Allbee, naked and ungainly, standing beside a woman who is dressing in great haste. "Her hair covered her face; nevertheless Leventhal thought he recognized her. Mrs Nunez! Was it Mrs Nunez? The horror of it bristled on him, and the outcry he had been about to make was choked down... The woman turned and he saw her plainly... She was a stranger, not Mrs Nunez; simply a woman. He felt enormously lightened, but at the same time it gave him a pang to think of his suspicion" (The Victim 242). Mrs Nunez is Leventhal's superintendant's wife and Leventhal has felt throughout the novel a sexual suggestiveness in her. Bellow's portrayal of the incident becomes highly suggestive because it throws light on the complexity in the character of Leventhal, who, being a
Jew, suffers deeply from a guilt complex towards the sexual interaction between man and woman.

Clayton says that Leventhal condemns Allbee’s behaviour because he sees the image of his desire in it: "... by denying guilt, by hating in Allbee what he cannot admit in himself, Asa separates himself from others—becomes less than human in his lack of compassion because he demands to be more than human, perfect, pure" (151-52). Clayton further says that Allbee is right when he tells Asa about adultery and about human nature which is too violent for human ideals. Allbee points out to Leventhal how the latter wants to be in a higher plane which is not a real one: “May be you have some other way, more refined, different? Don’t you people claim that you’re the same as everybody else? That’s your way of saying that you’re above everybody else. I know” (The Victim 245). While Allbee’s act cannot be justified, Leventhal’s angry words at Allbee cannot be taken in the right sense because, as Clayton says, Leventhal “was seeing a projection of his own unconscious desires—seeing the scene he wanted to act out” (151). The relationship between Leventhal and Allbee makes The Victim a complex novel.

Here it is not out of place to point out the similarities between Bellow’s The Victim and Dostoevsky’s novella, The Eternal Husband. Many critics have discussed the similarities between the two works. Maxwell Geismar remarks that The Victim shows “a sharp advance in Bellow’s craft” and “the use of a purely literary source... in Dostoevsky’s The Eternal Husband” (13). Daniel Fuchs, who attempts to correct earlier evaluation of Bellow’s novels in his book, Saul Bellow: Vision and
Revision, says that the dramatization of guilt leading to confrontation with the double becomes conspicuous in comparing The Victim and The Eternal Husband. Fuchs avers that Dostoevsky's The Double is the precursor of both. He also points out that though The Victim is strikingly similar to The Eternal Husband in certain respects, the emphasis is almost "as much metaphysical as it is psychological" (45). For example, the child-victim of The Eternal Husband dies as a result of humiliation derived from the guilt of both men; the child-victim in The Victim dies from a fated physical disease. In the opinion of Fuchs: "In The Eternal Husband Velchaninov is clearly at fault; his subconscious wells up for release. With Bellow's Leventhal it is much more a question of obligation or responsibility, in that disillusioned, late-forties sense" (45). Fuchs comments on the essential similarity between The Victim and The Eternal Husband:

The general scene of The Victim can fairly be called Dostoevskian: the hallucinatory, nocturnal, numinous quality; the unpromising urban backdrop; the steps, the room, the heat; the hide-and-seek beginning; the protagonist wishing to be decent but caught up in a petty bureaucracy which is a temptation to the contrary; the urban "bachelor" (Leventhal is married, but his good wife is necessarily out of town). (45)

Clayton states that the plot of The Victim "is based directly on a novella by Dostoevsky, The Eternal Husband" (141). Both Leventhal and Velchaninov are unwell physically and burdened with guilt. Both have to
encounter the "double," the projection of the guilt arising out of the action committed in the past. Both reject the doubles as wild animals, as less than human. The relationship between Leventhal and Allbee is similar to the relationship between Velchaninov and Trusotsky. In *The Eternal Husband*, Trusotsky tells Velchaninov that he had loved him and looked up to him and begs him to drink with him. He kissed Velchaninov's hand and begs for a kiss on the lips. He cares for Velchaninov like a mother when the latter is sick. In *The Victim*, Allbee wants to rub his fingers through Leventhal's kinky "Jew" hair, which is, as Clayton says, "an act more homoerotic than anti-Semitic" (142). Finally he brings a woman into Leventhal's bed. In Clayton's view, this is an act which shows not only Allbee's intention to take Leventhal's place but also to bind himself to Leventhal (142). In both the novels, the heroes draw close to their enemies, identify with them, and pity them. In both cases, there is the need for the attempted murder, the physical scuffle, and the expulsion.

Ellen Pifer states that *The Victim*, based on the plot of Dostoevsky's *The Eternal Husband*, employs many of the Russian master's characteristic efforts. "In the Dostoevskian manner," says Pifer, "Bellow deliberately refrains from supplying a logical explanation for the coincidence of his characters' initial encounter or for Leventhal's uncanny perceptions" (47). Pifer cites Leventhal's going to the park as an example. Leventhal sets out for the park without seeing the letter written by Allbee. He discovers the letter only after he returns home from his encounter with Allbee in the park. The point is that Leventhal is mysteriously drawn to the park where Allbee is waiting for him. Pifer observes: "Bellow employs,
moreover, Dostoevsky's characteristic device for heightening the sense of mystery: he deliberately blurs the boundary between his character's waking and dreaming states of consciousness" (47). Before going to the park, Leventhal awakes from apparent sleep and is confused whether he has really slept or not. In a subtle way, Bellow describes the boundary between sleep and waking: "He stretched out on the bed, pulling a pillow from beneath the spread and doubling it up. He thought he would doze off. But a little later he found himself standing at the window, holding the curtains with both hands. He was under the impression that he had slept" (The Victim 19). As the boundary between sleep and waking gets blurred, Leventhal does not know how he finds himself standing at the window.

Both The Victim and The Eternal Husband focus on the sensibility of inwardly torn man who is placed in a world where all is flux and nothing is absolute. Both the novels portray the alienation, despair, frustration and a sense of catastrophe experienced by man in the present world. Science and technology have made man powerful as never before, yet never before did he have such a sense of loss and alienation. Man is alienated and disaffiliated because he finds himself adrift in an indifferent universe. In the early years of the twentieth century, anthropologists discovered that neither religious standards nor ethical standards were absolutes. The influence of biological, social and economic forces on man has caused much rethinking regarding morality and ethics. This idea is presented effectively through the conflict between Velchaninov and Trusotsky in The Eternal Husband and the encounter between Leventhal and Allbee in The Victim.