Chapter III
HUMANISM IN MALAMUD'S FICTION
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All the protagonists of Malamud act as representatives of the suffering humanity, sharing the indefinite destiny of mankind. Everybody becomes a Jew in going through the sufferings of life. Malamud expresses this viewpoint by his statement, “I handled Jews as universal men. Every man is a Jew though he may not know it. The Jewish drama is a... symbol of the fight for existence in the highest possible terms. Jewish history is God’s gift of drama.”\(^1\) Thus Malamud observes struggling and suffering as the common features of the whole mankind. Malamud’s protagonists believe in the universality of suffering. Suffering educates them and ultimately helps them to derive the meaning of their lives. In ‘Angel Levine’, Manischewitz’s sufferings serve as a measure of his trust in human race- a way to his understanding that there are Jews everywhere, even among the blacks. “Believe me, there are Jews everywhere”.\(^2\)

As sufferers, Malamud’s protagonists function as the sheer images of human conscience. W.J. Handy reveals, in Malamud, “suffering has meant a discovery of new limits to what it means to be a human being...”.\(^3\) As such Malamud portrays the Jew as the symbol of any estranged or insignificant man. Malamud’s protagonists are secular men who submit themselves to intense suffering. They face suffering courageously for exalted reasons in a world of moral decay.
Hanvey Swados, Norman Mailer, J.D. Salinger and Herbert Gold have asserted that “the Jew is a peculiarly dramatic symbol for man’s struggle in the modern world”. Thus the interpretation of the Jew as an effective image of man’s horrible and fatal struggle grants him commonness and the status of ‘Every man’. Malamud asserts his viewpoint more clearly. “I handle the Jew as a symbol of the tragic experience of man existentially. I try to see the Jew as Universal man. Every man is a Jew, though he may not know it”. Robert Alter and Theodore Solotaroff also have mentioned that, Jewishness to Malamud is an “ethical symbol, a moral stance or a kind of metaphor for the tragic human condition and for a code of personal morality”.

The Jew acts as the symbol of common people’s struggling and suffering because all that occurs to a Jew happens to the people in general. Malamud’s literary sphere involves gentiles along with Jews, who are equally tormented by suffering and ill luck. They are dramatized, as ‘Secret Sharers’ of Jewish fate, which Malamud thinks, is suggestive of the modern man’s present condition. Malamud reveals that, the significant, unique experience of suffering particular to Jews, by broadening, mirrors the general human experience. According to Malamud, the Jew is the adequate, effective symbol of the suffering mankind. Malamud has chosen the Jew as the spokesman of the present day modern man who aspires to attain integrity and self-identity in the middle of struggling and suffering. Sandy Cohen has revealed that Malamud’s Jewish protagonists try “to become a
part of, and identify with the essentially gentile world of America to symbolize Everyman's quest for self-identification in too often hostile society.7 The question of identity worrying thousands of people in the modern world is embodied in the dilemmas faced by Malamud's characters. Malamud has granted his Jew, the genuine status with mankind in general. Leslie Field says: "In fact his (Malamud's) Jew may become indistinguishable from the non-Jew as he becomes homogenized in a larger, non-Jewish world. He may emerge as Everyman as his identification with his own people's overriding concerns becomes peripheral or marginal".8 The severe and dreadful battle of the Jew for a life based on real love, harmony and humanism can be the struggle of any man in the present world. As such, recently, the Jew has become a remarkable representation of the whole community. "From the hatred, feared or ridiculed figure he has transformed into a Man Who Suffered, Everyman."9

While analysing the Jewish history, we see that, the Jews, the so-called 'chosen people of God' have been selected for victimization and suffering. The terrific blood-shed in Nazi Germany, the pre-planned massacre in the form of pogroms in Russia, the physical and mental tortures of Auschwitz and Dachau and the ill-treatment of Jews in various other countries have forced the Jews, to run away from their native places to various other countries. In these foreign places, the Jews have lived as a small population, enslaved by the majority. But they have never abandoned their racial heritage, while adapting themselves to the new culture in their
laborious struggle for identity. Even though inhuman forces have oppressed them, they have remained united.

The mystery of this amazing integrity of Jews is related to their tradition – a "tradition of mutual responsibility – of the responsibility of the Jew for the other, of the individual Jewish collectivity, of the Jewish community for the single Jew in distress, of the better situated Jew for the under-privileged one". Experiencing the same brutality and insecurity, the Jews have developed a mutual consideration towards one another. Every Jew considers himself as his brother's defender. It is this compassionate spirit that has enabled the Jews to sustain in the most difficult times. Perpetual ill treatment and suffering have nourished the qualities of humanism and generosity. As a result, they always extend help to the disadvantaged people – not Jews alone, but non-Jews also. Max I. Dimont refers to this Jewish spirit as "No matter how poor a Jew is, he always feels there is someone poorer than he, and a Jew living on charity sees nothing incongruous in giving some of his charity money as charity to someone else." It is this humanism that lies at the heart of Jewishness.

According to Malamud, Jewishness is more than an ethnic identity. Malamud is a secular Jew whose Jewishness is based on humanism, compassion and suffering for others. Malamud's protagonists are not practising Jews, nor are their minds formed by a strong ethnic awareness. They suffer because of their inborn humanism and because of their adherence to their principles. Peter L. Hays says that Malamud's characters
come forth as "secular saints" from "the hellish depths of human misery"\textsuperscript{12} with courage, compassion and humanism. As such Malamud's Jewish protagonists rarely follow the religious or the traditional customs which distinguish the Jews from others. Ruth B. Mendel thinks "Becoming a Jew (in Malamud) always refers to secular, personal, inner struggle, and the best Jews are those who become moral men while continuing to suffer because the nature of their moral code demands self abnegation."\textsuperscript{13} Robert Alter has realized that Malamud has not touched the Jewish background in his works. He has noted that "although most of his protagonists are avowedly Jewish, he has never really written about Jews .... that nowhere does he attempt to represent a Jewish milieu, that a Jewish community never enters into his books, except as the shadow of a vestige of a specter."\textsuperscript{14} In Malamud's fiction, we see the lack of religious observance, in the places of worship and the method of adoration. The Jewish temple is a dirty, soiled room in \textit{The Mourners}, a small, grimy jail room in \textit{The Fixer} and a graveyard in \textit{The Assistant}. Since prayer, the real communication of man with God can happen anywhere, at anytime, Malamud's prayer services look different from each other. In \textit{Angel Levin}, the place of worship is an old tavern with four black Jews occupied in religious debate. In \textit{The Last Mohican}, it is described that instrumental music flows through a cathedral like synagogue where some Italian Jews are worshipping God. In \textit{The Silver Crown}, the place of worship is a storeroom where a rabbi and his twelve disciples conduct prayer. Now we can understand that Malamud
is neither bothered about his Jewish background nor about the projection
of his Jewish characters as practising Jews who are steadfast in observing
the religious traditions. Actually Malamud's attitude appears to be broader
and more secular. Robert Alter denotes that for Malamud, "the Jewish
tradition is essentially hetrodox and secular, divorced from its source in
orthodox Judaism and the European situation that conditioned it, and no
longer appropriate in an open, liberal social system".15

Malamud himself has expressed disagreement with the expression
"Jewish-American writer". In an interview with Leslie and Joyce Field,
Malamud has clarified the term "Jewish – American writer" as "schematic
and reductive" and has pointed out that "if the scholar needs the term he
can have it, but it won't be doing him any good if he limits his
interpretation of a writer to fit a label he applies."16 Malamud has said in
another interview that jewishness is important to him, but he does not
regard himself only a Jewish writer. "I have interests beyond that and I feel
I am writing for all men".17 In an interview in 1958, Malamud has told that
he wrote about the Jews because, "I know them. But more important I write
about them because the Jews are absolutely the very stuff of drama".18

According to Malamud jewishness means struggling and suffering for
the sake of others. For Malamud, Judaism is a manner of life and a history,
surpassing racial barriers and imparted from generation to generation. In
his fiction, Malamud devises a secular humanism, derived from those
human attributes that are shared with all human beings, regardless of their
religion and nationality. By this method, Malamud unites the Jews and the
gentiles so close that one finds it difficult to differentiate between a Jew and
a gentile in his fiction. And as such, we find his protagonists realize
towards the end of their career that their human relationships with people
are more important than their religious biases or racial prejudices.

Malamud himself has asserted that his fiction is chiefly based on
humanism. Through his works, Malamud tries his level best to activate the
inborn human potentials of his Jewish protagonists, which are common to
all human beings, irrespective of their religion or culture. In an interview
with Frankel, he has expressed his ideology as “My work, all of it, is an idea
of dedication to the human. That’s basic to every book. If you don’t respect
man, you cannot respect my work. I am in defence of the human”. In
Malamud’s viewpoint a true humanist is a socially dedicated person who
undergoes struggling and suffering for the welfare of others. Malamud views
this commitment to others as the final measure of a man’s humanity. Being
human means being aware of the requisites of others.

Some of Malamud’s characters are real human beings in the sense
that they identify themselves with the needs and sufferings of his fellowmen
and sacrifice their joys for the sake of others. Ex. – ‘Morris Bober’ in The
Assistant, ‘Yakov Bok’ in The Fixer etc. In Malamud’s opinion, a man
realizes himself better by his commitment to the society in which he lives.
He should take part in the joys and sorrows of others. The essence of
humanism lies in the collective responsibility of men, which can only be
experienced, when one individual becomes ready to share the struggling and the suffering of another. Once Malamud wrote to Sidney Richman: "I consider Judaism, once I got to know about it through reading, as another source of humanism". By going through Malamud's fiction, the ultimate lesson we learn is that one's dedication to the betterment of society makes him part of the society and enables him to share the universal joy of all.

Malamud's first novel The Natural begins with the ventures of 'Roy Hobbs', a nineteen-year-old boy, who wishes to emerge as the best baseball hero. When we meet Roy, he is on his way to Chicago for a try out with the Cubs. He is accompanied by Sam Simpson, an old baseball player who aspires to bring forth Roy's talent as the 'pitcher of the century'. Sam takes with him Roy, the immatured genius, to introduce him to Clarence Malligan of the Cubs for a trial. With his handmade bat 'Wonderboy', designed from an Oak tree that had been split by lightening, Roy appears as an extremely talented baseball player, suitable to become 'the best there is'.

Outside the field, Roy is an unworldly and selfish country bumpkin. He relies on Sam to a great extent and thinks without Sam he would feel "Shaky-kneed and unable to say or do simple things like ask for directions or know where to go once you had dropped a nickel into the subway" (P.12). Travelling in a train for the first time in life, he bothers too much about how much money to gift a porter, who mocks at him for his odd behaviour. Sam is a gentle, humanitarian fellow. He arranges a berth for Roy in the train while he himself takes rest in the ordinary
compartment. "You take the bed, Kiddo, You're the one that has to show what you have got on the ball when we pull into the city. It don't matter where I sleep" (P.12). Sam acquaints Roy to the Whammer, the most popular baseball player of America. Later he pledges with the Whammer that Roy can win over him by just three pitches.

The contrast between Roy and Walter rises to sarcastic terms. While Roy appears to Walter as "a left-handed monkey", Walter seems to Roy, "a giant with a wood held like a caveman's axe on his shoulder" (26). According to Walter, the revolving ball of Roy is like 'a slow spinning planet looming toward the earth'. Roy establishes his stance in the baseball game by defeating the baseball hero 'the Whammer'. In the meanwhile one of Roy's balls strikes Sam Simpson. As a result, he gets seriously injured and dies on the spot. Before dying, Sam gives Roy his purse and also encourages him.

"Go on, Kiddo, you got to see Clarence Mulligan tomorrow and say I sent you – they are expecting you. Give them everything you have got on the ball – that'll make me happy" (P.36).

Here Sam Simpson acts as the very embodiment of compassion by revealing through his life that one's happiness lies in the happiness of others. After Sam's death, Roy is compelled by the circumstances to continue his quest all alone. Roy would have won over his quest if he had realized the true spirit of mutual responsibility which Sam's life represents. But Roy fails to perceive the real meaning of compassion because of his egoism.
From the beginning of the novel, we are introduced to Roy's weaknesses of egotism, selfishness and uncontrollable desire for women. Roy's victory over 'the Whammer' brings him close to Harriet Bird, 'a girl in a dressy black dress'. Thrilled by Roy's triumph in the match, she admires him that he is like "David jawboning the Goliath – Whammer, or was it Sir Percy lancing Sir Maldemer, or the first son ranged against the primitive Papa?" (P.30). On hearing this, Roy's willpower rises to its summit and he imagines himself to be the greatest baseball player. But the affair comes to an end when Harriet shoots Roy Hobbs with a silver bullet, in a mysterious manner.

In the second part of the novel 'Batter Up,' when Roy appears after fifteen years since the shooting incident, he is determined to win the game. He hopefully joins the team 'the New York Knights'. However his career development is obstructed by his erotic attraction to Memo Paris, Bump Bailey's girlfriend and the team manager Pop Fischer's niece. Now we understand that Roy has learnt nothing from his past experiences. Even after fifteen long years of suffering, his character remains the same. Despite Pop Fischer's warnings and constant discouragement of Memo Paris, Roy pursues her. Slowly his desire for Memo grows to the state of hunger. This hunger later appears in the form of over-appetite and he is forced to eat excessively and fall sick.

At this period, Roy gets an opportunity to redeem himself. Mike Barney, the father of a fan of Roy, begs Roy to hit a homer so that Roy's
successful hit might save the life of his son, Pete. Roy realizes that his act
of compassion provides “a bleak through the alienating ego and a rescue
by surrogate of the child within” 22 and determines to win over the game.
But Pop would not permit him to play with his bat the ‘Wonderboy’. As far
as Roy is concerned, it is very difficult for him to change his bat because of
his selfish and sentimental attachment to the bat. So Roy falls into a great
dilemma. And at last, Roy determines to ‘give up’ his bat for the physical
recovery of his ardent fan. Ironically enough, Pop now permits him to play
with his own bat. Just before the beginning of the game against the Cubs,
Roy sees a black-haired lady (Iris Lemon) standing in the audience in order
to show her confidence in him. With her support, Roy hits the ball with
glorious success:

Roy circles the bases like a Mississippi steamboat, lights lit,
flags fluttering, whistle banging, coming round the bend. The
knights poured out of their dugout to pound his back and
hundreds of their rooters hopped about in the field. He stood
on the homebase, lifting his cap to the lady’s empty seat(139).

Roy thus saves the life of his fan and for the first time in life, realizes the
meaning of compassion.

Throughout the novel Iris Lemon embodies the spirit of compassion.
It is she who helps Roy to boost his spirits at the critical time by sacrificing
her reputation. As a grandmother at thirty-three, Iris is the agent of
humanism, “the exemplar of human potential”. 24 Iris exhorts him to be a
hero, not for the realization of his ego but for the welfare of others. She tells
him, “I hate to see a hero fail. There are so few of them” (P. 145). She expects him to be a man as well as a hero.

Iris’s human nature is revealed when she stood up in the stands to assure her confidence in him during the time of his slump. Also she accepts the loss of her privacy with goodwill for she later reveals “I don’t think you can do anything for anyone without giving up something of your own” (P.145–146). Only because of Iris’s encouragement, Roy regains his lost confidence. He once more hits the ball “through the light and up into the dark, like a white star seeking an old constellation” (P. 139) and wins a tremendous victory.

In the last test series also Roy does not rise above his baser self. Then Iris helps him to overcome his weaknesses. She stands once again before the audience, in order to make Roy aware of his moral obligations towards his team and towards his fans. In the meanwhile, accidentally, a foul ball thrown by Roy at his fan Otto Zipp strikes her. Then he carries the wounded Iris to the clubhouse and tries to respond to her need of love and protection. She appeals to him, ‘win for us, you were meant to’. Then Roy, ‘wild with love for her and the child’, (P.210) makes a severe attempt to win the game. It becomes ‘the most important thing he ever had to do in his life’ (P. 213). But now, luck does not bestow on Roy and he fails in the match against the Pirates. The ‘Wonderboy’, Roy’s source of power breaks, making him sad and miserable.
After his failure in the final match, Roy's possibilities for a new life can spring only from his commitment to Iris. And he understands that in the end. By his humanitarian approach to Iris, he transcends his baser self and becomes a morally responsible man capable of undertaking suffering for the sake of others.

In *The Assistant* Malamud portrays the conversion of Frank Alpine from an estranged and immature self to a disciplined and morally responsible man by undergoing severe suffering. Norman Leer's inquiry of the character's quest for "a commitment to other individuals" and Hay's study of "the I-Thou relationship" in the novel, can be viewed as oblique clues of humanism. Malamud does not want *The Assistant* to be called a simple moral fable, since "the spirit is more than moral and by the same token, there's more than morality in a good man". William Goyen finds the interest of the novel in "the clarity and concreteness of his (Malamud's) style, the warm humanity over his people, the tender wit that keeps them firm and compassionate". In this novel, Malamud tries to seek moral beauty in humanism, which occupies no place in a materialistic society, as demonstrated in the life of Morris Bober. Anyway it helps both Morris Bober and Frank Alpine to get satisfaction in life.

To Morris Bober and Frank Alpine, humanism develops in the form of reciprocal commitment. Morris Bober, an old man of poor health is almost entombed in a grocery store for about twenty-two years of his life. He now feels sorry that he has failed to make enough money for the college
education of his only daughter, Helen. The tiring work of the grocery store has made him "weightless, unmanned, the victim in motion of whatever blew at his back ......" 27 (P.183). Even though troubled by ill-luck, he is not completely crumpled by the continuous struggling and suffering. He has the will power to be compassionate to other people leading an impoverished life. Misfortune knocks him from time to time and lowers his spirits. But his humane nature remains constant because of his unwavering moral integrity. While the other Jewish neighbours alter their luck on material level by the change of business, Morris would not do that for the sake of the whole world.

Morris Bober, with his miserable, tiring business in a tomb-like grocery store, exemplifies the spirit of humanism. He adheres to humanitarian values even at the cost of self-effacement. In the very beginning of the novel, we find him waking up so early in the morning to give his first customer, a Polishesh woman, her daily three-cent roll of bread. He does not have the capacity to see the tears, rolling down from the eyes of the drunken woman's daughter and at once gives her credit.

Morris Bober extends his generosity and compassionate attitude to anyone who comes in contact with, from the 'Drunken Woman' to 'Al Marcus', the paper products salesman, 'although he had a comfortable pile'. He helps others without bothering about his financial condition. Because of his sympathetic attitude, he takes into the grocery store, Frank
Alpine, a wanderer and allows him to stay in the store, though Frank begins his career by robbing the Bober's bread and milk.

While working in the grocery store, he steals daily from the Bober's cash box and also he forces his eyes on Helen. But gradually the Bober's goodwill, honesty and humanism affect Frank. Then Frank regards it immoral on his part to utilise such a good man for his own benefit. And his guilty feeling takes him close to Bober. Naturally, they open out their minds to each other and hence develop a mutual compassion to one another. Morris's prolonged suffering annoys Frank and he comments about the Jews as "That's what they live for, Frank thought, to suffer. And the one that has got the biggest pain in the gut and can hold on to it the longest without running to the toilet is the best Jew. No wonder they got on his nerves" (81). But in Morris Bober's opinion, a true Jew is a man who undertakes suffering willingly for the sake of the law. This is to become a good, compassionate human being. "My father used to say to be a Jew all you need is a good heart"(P.112). These sensitive comments of Morris bring to light the fact that Malamud "transcends all sectarian understanding of suffering, seeing it as the fate of the whole mankind, which can only be mitigated when all men assume responsibility for each other".28

Reasonably speaking, Morris Bober is not a Jew apparently, for he does not practise any of the religious rituals and customs. When Frank inquires him, why being a Jew, he eats ham, Morris answers "Nobody
will tell me that I am not Jewish because I put in my mouth once in a while, when my tongue is dry, a piece of ham. But they will tell me, and I will believe them, if I forget the Law." (P. 112-113). Thus Morris is not a conventional Jew for he does not follow Mosaic dietary laws. Throughout his life, he has not even gone to a synagogue to pray. But he is a Jew in the sense that he is, "a Jew in exile, exiled from most of his own formal traditions". The rabbi at Morris's funeral also stresses the same point;

Yes, Morris Bober was to me a true Jew because he lived in the Jewish experience, which he remembered, and with the Jewish heart. May be not to our formal tradition – for this I don't excuse him – but he was true to the spirit of our life – to want for others that which he wants also for himself (P. 203).

Morris Bober exemplifies the morale of Judaism, not its rules. He suffers endlessly not because he is a Jew, but because of his compassionate and humane nature.

Morris's struggle for survival comes mainly from his extreme truthfulness and moral integrity. When Karps, a Jewish family, living in Morris's neighbourhood improves the business by establishing a liquor shop, Morris would not do that because of his charitable attitude.

The grocer, on the other hand, had never altered his fortune, unless degrees of poverty meant alteration, for luck and he were, if not natural enemies, not good friends. He laboured long hours, was the soul of honesty – he could not escape his honesty, it was bedrock" (19).

Morris Bober never cheats his customers though he is on the verge of starvation. When Frank reveals to him a few ways to make money, Morris asks him "Why should I steal from my customers? Do they steal from me?"
He says “When a man is honest, he don’t worry when he sleeps. This is more important than to steal a nickel”.

Bober’s ‘true strength’ rests ‘in his sweet nature and his understanding’. He has realized what was good and correct. He works hard in the store and enjoys being honest and compassionate to others. This is because in Malamud’s fiction, “the more conscious one becomes of himself as a human being, the more willing he is to embrace the conditions that make him human and in doing so affirms himself as a participant in the human enterprise.”

Morris Bober never tries to exploit others. When a new comer inquires about his wretched grocery store in order to buy it, Morris cannot hide the reality. He plainly reveals to him, the condition of the store and about his poor earnings. Hearing Morris’s opinion, the immigrant at once drops his plan of buying the store.

Overwhelmed by pity for the poor refugee, at what he had in all probability lived through, a man who had sweated blood to save a few brutal dollars, Morris, unable to stand the planned dishonesty, came from behind the counter, and, taking Podolsky by the coat lapels, told him earnestly that the store was run-down but that a boy with his health and strength, with modern methods and a little cash could build it up in a reasonable time and make a decent living out of it.

Thus we find, even though Morris cannot attain victory on material level, he earns a sure victory on humanitarian level.

Also Morris’s conscience does not allow him to burn down the store in order to collect the insurance money. Once when Morris is badly in need of money, the professional fire maker provides him the idea that he can set
the store on fire without much difficulty. Though Morris cannot entertain ‘the monkey business’ he tries fire the next day with his celluloid because of his temptation to gain money. And when the fire flares-up, Morris grasps the severity of his action and tries to stamp out the fire in vain. In the meanwhile, his fingers get burnt, making his life more miserable.

In Malamud’s view, Morris Bober is the very representative of humanism. When Louis Karp’s liquor store gets burnt, he intends to substitute it with Morris’s grocery store. On knowing this news, Morris rejoices at his luck. In that delightful mood, he removes snow from the roadside so that people who go to the church can pass through easily. Due to this compassionate act, he becomes a victim of pneumonia and dies in the hospital. Thus Morris Bober, the poor, old grocer sacrifices his life for the sake of others because he cannot take advantage of others and also because of his commitment to other people.

Frank Alpine, the grocery store assistant of *The Assistant* demonstrates through his life the fact that suffering for the sake of others is the essential quality of moral regeneration. The novel pictures his “successful initiation into a new spiritual self”. By his personal contact with Morris Bober, the impoverished Jewish grocer, Frank becomes sensitive to the values of honesty, truthfulness and humanism symbolized in the person, Morris Bober. By his association with Morris Bober, Frank imbibes the mental courage necessary to overcome his own weaknesses. He
also acquires the capacity to do good to others even at the cost of his own struggling and suffering.

Like Roy Hobbs, who travels to Chicago thinking that he is due for something big, Frank Alpine, the drifter of *The Assistant*, has ‘lately come from the west, looking for better opportunity’(P.30). Frank is a wanderer, without a home and without any clear moral principles. But he has got some good aspirations. Though poor and dejected, he is in search of ‘something worthwhile’ (P.30), a moral code of behaviour or ‘a discipline’, that will provide meaning to his life.

Even though Frank longs deeply to do well, he cannot resist giving way to his baser instincts. He aspires a ‘new life’, yet looks for it by partaking in criminal activities. “at crime, he would change his luck, make adventure, live like a prince”(P.84). So he collaborates with Ward Minogue to steal from the grocery store of Morris. Later Frank’s guilty conscience troubles him and he becomes Morris’s grocery assistant in order to expiate the crime. During the time of Morris’s illness, due to the attack from Ward Minogue, Frank works hard in the store to increase the income of the grocery. Thus by improving the business, he wins the confidence of Morris’s wife, Ida. In spite of his sincere efforts to become good, he cannot overcome his baser instincts. He always longs for Helen, Morris’s young and pretty daughter and he plans to continue in the grocery store, in order to win Helen.
In Frank Alpine we see a continuous conflict between saintly and criminal instincts. His keen wish to do well is evident in his admiration of St., Francis and his involuntary liking of Morris Bober. On finding a picture of St. Francis in a magazine, he remarks, "Every time I read about somebody like him I get a feeling inside of me I have to fight to keep from crying. He was born good, which is a talent if you have it"(31). Ever since his childhood, Frank feels a kind of sentimental adoration to St. Francis because of the saint's simplicity and love of poor people. He says, "For instance he [St.Francis] gave everything away that he owned, every cent, all his clothes off his back. He enjoyed being poor. He said poverty was a queen and he loved her like she was a beautiful woman"(P.31). And in Morris Bober he finds such goodness and poverty and he is naturally drawn towards Morris. At the same time Frank is a sensualist and a thief. He lusts after Helen and at times he cannot control his lusty desires that he peeps through the bathroom window to watch Helen naked. Though Frank feels it immoral on his part to take advantage of such a good man like Morris Bober, he finds it hard to give up his practice of stealing. He does not mention certain sales on the cash register. Also he steals from Bober's cash drawer daily. He behaves as a man with double impulses, an unintegrated man. His good motives always clash with his bad ones putting him in complex dilemmas. "He is not bad; it is only that he finds it prohibitively difficult to be good as he would wish a saint's good".32 Though he justifies his actions on the basis that he is trying his level best to
enhance the profit of Morris, he feels ‘remorseful’ in his inner heart and
‘exhort(s) himself to be honest’ (64). “He might some day pluck down a
tenner or so on some ongshot and then have enough to pay back every
lousy cent of what he had taken” (78).

Progressively, Morris’s capacity to bear adversities and his kind
human nature fascinates Frank. He also feels a sense of guilt over his
misdoing towards Morris. Even though tormented by guilty conscience, he
cannot confess his crimes to Morris for fear of losing Helen. And his pangs
of guilt lead him towards moral refinement.

He felt gentle to the people who came into the store, especially
the kids, whom he gave penny crackers for nothing. He was
gentle to Morris, and the Jew was gentle to him. And he was
filled with a quiet gentleness for Helen and no longer climbed
the airshaft to spy on her, naked in the bathroom (P.79).

But it is a truth that such relaxing moments are very rare.

The basic change in Frank is indicated frequently while he goes
through Raskolnikov’s suffering in ‘Crime and Punishment’. Frank “first
had the idea he must be a Jew and was surprised when he found he wan’t”
(P.97). Soon afterwards he has “this crazy sensation that he was reading
about himself” (P.98). So we get the idea that suffering is constantly related
with the Jews and that any person who suffers is a Jew.

The character of Frank is that he would spoil his long cherished
dreams with some stupid act in the end. His cautiously made up
relationships with Helen Bober shatter to pieces by his seduction attempt.
Thereafter he repents and tries his level best to amend for the crime he has
done by sacrificing himself for the Bober family. He devotes himself completely to the store to raise the financial condition of the Bobers. Others notice the increasing change in Frank. Ward calls him a 'stinking kike' (p.130). Once Helen tells her mother that he is "a man, a human being like us" (p.131). Frank affirms this change when he says, "I am not the same guy I once was" (p. 128).

Frank's transformation from a selfish, frustrated individual to a morally developed and responsible man can be viewed in his changing outlook towards Helen. He now feels motherly love towards her. He has transformed the erotic love to selfless compassion. "Then, one day, for no reason he would give, though the reason felt familiar, he stopped climbing up the air shaft to peek at Helen, and he was honest in the store" (214).

After Morris's death, Frank chooses to lead the impoverished, compassionate life of his spiritual father in the grocery store. Frank realized that Morris endured and lived for giving alms to others "because giving and living meant more than taking or ego".  He becomes a Jew in spirit as he accepts Morris's principles as his life's guidelines. At the time of Morris's funeral, Frank experiences his final identification as the dead grocer and his life changes from a spiritually sterile one to a life of commitments. During the time of Morris's funeral, Frank unwittingly falls into Morris's grave and comes out of it as Morris. And this incident becomes an act of 'ritual rebirth'. 34
Frank adapts himself to the life of Morris Bober, and so he becomes a man capable of human relationship. And, therefore, in a figurative act, "Frank went to the hospital and had himself circumcised. For a couple of days he dragged himself around with a pain between his legs. The pain enraged and inspired him. After Passover he became a Jew" (P.217). Referring to Frank's final act, Theodore Solotaroff asserts that Frank has established with this final act, "his investiture of a set of moral attitudes". Frank's acceptance of Judaism is not religious, but spiritual. It represents his dedication to other people, a commitment to human solidarity. Frank's transformations alter theology "as the fate of the whole mankind which can only be mitigated when all men assume responsibility for others". In his final conversion to Judaism, Frank, "eradicates the barriers between theologies".

'Seymour Levin', the protagonist of *A New Life* travels a long distance from the East to the West in quest of 'a new life', 'his manifest destiny'. He picks up the selected vocation of a teacher at Cascadia and searches 'Order, value, accomplishment, love' in life. Levin thinks that a new place and a new mode of living will bring change in his life. For his useless past, he accuses none, but himself. When Pauline Gilley inquires him about the aim of his expedition, he reveals that he wants to stand by 'an ideal or two' which will give meaning to his life. Even though he does not mention the ideals, we understand towards the end that he stands for humanism.
As a result, Levin takes upon himself the burden of keeping civilization from self-demolition. He remembers Emerson's words, "whoever would be a man must be a non conformist" (P. 216) and begins his operation against the inhuman, orthodox practices in the Cascadia department. He struggles for the significance of the liberal arts because he has got firm faith that only liberal arts can strengthen both the spirit of democracy and our knowledge of life. He asserts "A man can find an ideal worth living for in the liberal arts. It might inspire him to work for a better society. It takes only one good man to make the world a little better" (P. 256). He defends liberal arts on the ground that it promotes the humanistic values. On the other hand, professional studies destroy the human aptitude in man. He urges the students to give importance to the study of liberal arts before they become skilled professionals. Levin requests the students to write about the real life and about the principles of mutual love and freedom, so as to improve the human condition in this world.

Levin deepens his crusade as he gets dissatisfied with the present situation. He reasserts his freedom and attains new identity by promoting human values. Louis D. Rubin Jr. notes in this context that "Malamud does what every good novelist must do: he makes his subject matter into a metaphor of human experience". During the campaign for freedom and humanism, his outlook is so enlarged that he feels committed not for the few, but for the whole mankind.
He had visions of service to others, the truest form of freedom, a secret he had unlocked .... He had become an extraordinary physician, S. Levin, M.D., F.A.C.S,............. He healed the sick, crippled, blind, especially children. When not practicing medicine he wrote, played the harpsichord, or spun his spinning wheel. In his tiny room only a cot, table, chair and shelf of books. He lived on dried dates and goat's milk. He often fasted for days ...... He lived everywhere. Every country he came to was his own, a matter of understanding history. In Africa he grafted hands on the handless and gave bread and knowledge to the poor. In India he touched the untouchables. In America he opened the granaries and freed the slaves(P.254).

Here Malamud's solicitation of the noted social workers of the world suggests the keenness of Levin's moral ideals, his love and kindness for the whole humanity at large.

The way he contests in the election against Dr. Gerald Gilley to put into practise his humanistic ideals make him 'the subject of much talk and rancor' (P.297). Levin believes that 'a good teacher is a liberator'. So when Hemingway's story 'Indian Camp' is removed from the syllabus due to narrow-minded views, Levin feels that it is his duty to fight against such conservative ideas. And his drive towards freedom makes his seniors unfriendly towards him. Totally absorbed in his work as reformer of the society, Levin over-acts his role, creating great confusion in the English department. “He lived on the edge of things, on edge, his nerves ragged, yet forcing himself to push his campaign to get himself elected” (P.297). According to Richard Astro “Levin is diminished as a character in those scenes set in Cascadia English department.” The deceitful politics of Cascadia English department acts as a foil to the sincerity of Levin who earnestly strives for his principles. Through Levin, Malamud expresses his
love of liberalism as against conservatism. Thus as Sidney Richman says, Levin’s “emotional excesses, all motivated by a yearning to find a place for his ideals in the real world, identify the comic hero: the picaresque saint who, Quixote-like, seeks to overwhelm the evils of the world with enthusiasm.”

Levin’s campaign against Dr. Gerald Gilley for the headship of the department is supported from a personal point of view, as he is involved in an affair with his wife. Right from the beginning, it is evident that they are fascinated towards each other. It is in her company that he feels most happy. And his very first affair with Pauline in the woods provides him self-satisfaction. Also the relationship liberates him from spiritual emptiness, though it worries his moral sense.

Levin’s compassion for Pauline enables him to grant her wishes. She appeals him to allow her to perform the role of his life partner. She also requests him to compel Gilley to let the adopted children be with her. As for her wishes, Levin goes to Gilley inspite of his drive “to give Gilley back everything he had taken from him and more”(P.328). Gilley tries his level best to discourage Levin by presenting him a terrifying account of the troubles he would face with Pauline. Yet Levin is ready to accept Pauline and her children. Annoyed at this, Gilley demands him to leave college teaching in order to let the children to live with Pauline. Levin screams in vain that the demand is immoral and inhuman. Yet he agrees to Gilley’s
conditions because he realizes that Pauline cannot live without the children.

It is humanism and devotion to his principles that equip Levin to assume the responsibility of pregnant Pauline and her adopted children. He perceives in his act “a way of giving value to other lives through assuring human rights” (P.239). Compassion to Pauline provides him the necessary moral courage to undertake serious burdens.

In an interview with Miss Masilomani, Malamud denies the opinion that by the end of the novel, Levin has stopped loving Pauline. He says, “Levin has not ceased to love her. There can be no responsibility without some love. The golden hoop rings he gave her which she fastened on to her ears are symbolic of love, to me symbolic of the wedding ring”. Levin’s love for Pauline is conditioned by humanism. By his compassionate attitude to Pauline, Levin perceives the truth that, love exists not with freedom but with responsibility and commitment. Anthony Burgess and Edgar Stanley Hyman point out that Levin becomes a saint not through the denial of the flesh as does Frank in The Assistant, but “through the assertion of its rights”.

In The Fixer, Malamud deals with the life of a poor fixer man in the Tsarist Russia, who comes forth through his rigorous struggle as champion of the entire human race. When we go through the book, we feel excited by the way Yakov’s mind functions. His thoughts keep changing as he suffers acute mental and physical agony in the Kiev prison. His superhuman
endurance reveals the "indomitability of the human spirit". Suffering activates Yakov's moral progress and he determines to live and suffer not for himself, but for Shmuel, Raisl, for the Jewish community and at last for the whole humanity. Edwin Eigner points out that "suffering has taught him to 'fear less' and to love Raisl whom he had hated, and to hate the Tsar, whose "loyal subject' he had been". Daniel Day Williams remarks "suffering leads to self-knowledge and communication with others and thus becomes a power to contribute to the fulfilment of life". Joseph Featherstone says; "In Bok you recognize the archetypal Malamud hero, the ironic victim who grows in compassion as he suffers". In fact, suffering is based on the reciprocal commitment of human beings which can only be experienced when one becomes willing to share the burden of another.

When we meet Yakov Bok for the first time, he is about to leave the Shtetl, his native place, in quest of a new life in Kiev. He begins his journey with very high hopes about material progress. He is fed up with the inadequacy of opportunities and possibilities in the Shtetl. More than that, he is dissatisfied with his past. Totally bitter about life, he remarks: "I've been cheated from the start ....... The Shtetl is a prison ....... It moulders and the Jews moulder in it. Here we're all prisoners, I don't have to tell you, so it's time to try elsewhere".

In his earnest search for a prosperous new life, he discards his Jewish identity and his Jewish God. To Shmuel's exhortations, he retorts: "Who forgets who? ....... What do I get from him but a bang on the head
and a stream of piss in my face. So what's there to be worshipful about?........ Today I want my piece of bread, not in paradise” (P.19).

Yakov cuts off his Jewish beard so as to conceal his Jewish identity. Ever since his childhood, he has witnessed the Jews suffer so acutely. And he hates to become a victim of the Jewish history, accepting suffering as an integral part of his life. During his perilous journey to Kiev, he meets an anti-Semitic boatman who wants the total annihilation of the Jews. Hearing his ardent wish, Yakov gets frightened and drops his Jewish prayer books into the Dnieper river. In Malamud’s fictional circle, disowning one’s religion means disowning one’s humanity and to repudiate one’s past life means to deny one’s chances for a bright future. In his struggle for a successful, new life, Yakov discards both his past and his identity and thus prevents his chances for a fulfilling future.

Yakov, with his secular attitude and uncertain belief never pleads God to save him from life’s difficulties. He does not accept the reality of a superhuman force, which behaves impartially to all. In his viewpoint, God is non-existent, an illusion. Yakov thinks that we “live in a world where the clock ticks fast while he’s on his timeless mountain staring in space. He doesn’t see us and he doesn’t care” (P.19). With his broad outlook, Yakov regards himself as a free thinker. During one of his cross-examinations, he discloses to the prosecuting attorney: “..... In fact, to tell the whole truth, I am not a religious man, I am a freethinker ....... a man’s religion is his own business, and that’s all there is to it .......” (P.123). By questioning God’s
existence, Yakov “becomes a paradigm of a new hero – one who, given the context of his own feebleness, even irrelevance, when confronting it triumphs because he endures”.49

At Podol, the Jewish quarter in Kiev, Yakov does not trace any chance of fulfilling his material desires. He wants “better, at least better than he had, too much of nothing”(33). His rescue of a rich man named Nikolai Lebedev, a member of the violent anti-Semitic group, the Black Hundreds, guides him to the lucrative job of an overseer in a brick factory. His taking up of the job requires his living in an area forbidden to the Jews. As a result, he gets confused and he fears “what worried him most – to be unmasked as a hidden Jew”(P.60).

When the dead body of a Christian boy with thirty-seven stab wounds is found in the nearby area, the anti-Semites doubt Yakov. They accuse him of having performed the ritual murder and they put him in the prison confinement. During his stay at the brick factory, once he rescues an old Hasid from violent mob of boys. He carries the old man to his room, attends to his wounds and allows him to take rest in his room for the whole night. Later the bloody rags and the matzos of the old man turn out to be the chief evidences against him.

Even though Yakov rejects his Jewish identity and declares to be a freethinker, it is as a Jew that he now has to suffer. The people of Kiev consider him as a hard-hearted Jew, a blood-sucking savage. Thus he is compelled by the circumstances into “being a Jew despite himself”.50 While
conducting the inquiry, the prosecuting attorney, Grubeshov forces Yakov to answer the questions based on Jewish rituals. And this makes Yakov conscious of the fact that the anti-Semetics try to impose the crime on him only because he is a Jew.

Now Yakov feels terribly dejected at his fate. He also gets frightened of the cruel authorities inclined to impose the crime on him, which he actually is not guilty of. They put him in jail for about three years without any indictment. More than that they inflict on Yakov every kind of mental and physical torture in order to extract from Yakov, the confession of a crime, which he never performed. They torture him, ill-treat him and beat him brutally. Yakov feels it “perilous to be alive’ under such circumstances.

The severity of the dehumanizing process does not produce any adverse effect on Yakov’s spiritual progress. While physically he is imprisoned, spiritually he strives to attain freedom. And the moment he learns to rise above self-sympathy, he refuses to acknowledge his persecution.

Liberation from the prison confinement is assured to Yakov if he admits that the Jews killed the boy for performing ritual rites. Grubshov offers the freedom of confession with cleverness and tact:

Listen, Bok, I speak to you for your own good. Your position otherwise is hopeless. A confession by you will have more than one beneficial effect..... I am willing to see to it that you are secreted out of prison and taken to Podovoloshchisk on the Austrian border. You will have a Russian passport in your pocket and the means of transportation to some country outside of Europe. This includes Palestine, America or even Australia, if you choose to go there. I advise you to consider
this most carefully. The alternative is to spend your lifetime in prison under circumstances much less favourable than those you are presently enjoying (P.203).

But Yakov does not yield. He knew “A confession ... would doom him forever. He was already doomed”(P.203). He draws inspiration and courage from the realization that he is more “important to the state at large and to his people in particular”.51 He welcomes acute suffering more than wrong confession.

With the passage of time, Yakov’s outlook towards religion changes. At times he becomes a conservative Jew. He earnestly opens the phylactery box left with him long ago and reads with great enthusiasm Jewish verses found in the box. The Deputy Warden gets highly excited at this ‘new evidence’. But soon Yakov becomes a true Christian by reading the New Testament. He even practises long hours to learn some of the verses by heart. He realizes the essence of Christianity and bewilder “How can anyone love Christ and keep an innocent man suffering in prison?”(p.202).

According to Gerald Hoag, Yakov’s denial of confessing the crime comes out “not so much from hostility as from a need to affirm his innocence and to stand independent of the whole alien system that accuses him. It is a positive act.” 52 Spinoza and Bibikov act as spiritual fathers to Yakov. Bibikov’s fellow feeling towards other people is reflected in his kind and human attitude to Bok. He expects of individuals, to be kind and compassionate minded, sharing the responsibility of one another. He thinks “if he (the individual) has some small thing to offer he does so at the risk of
diminishing his humanity" (P.173). These lines imply that the individual should never forget about his responsibilities. Spinoza's political viewpoints guide Bok to his impassioned participation in history. "If the state acts in ways that are abhorrent to human nature it's the lesser evil to destroy it. Death to the anti-semites! Long live revolution! Long live liberty!" (P.247). The sense of entanglement in the historical progress is devotion to humanity. This reinforces the belief that "there are ways to reverse history". This new knowledge assists Yakov to forget his own miseries.

Shmuel's hidden coming to the prison further nourishes Yakov's moral strength. Shmuel's sense of responsibility is evident in his paying out forty roubles to meet Yakov in the prison. Soon Yakov's condition in the prison worsens as the warden comes to know about Shmuel's visit. Tied to the wall like an animal in the long daylight and permitted to sleep on the bed plank with 'his legs locked in the stocks', Yakov sees no purpose in life. "In chains all that was left of freedom was life, just existence; but to exist without choice was the same as death" (P.240). But in one of his dreams, Yakov sees Shmuel dead. He gets up and cries "Live Shmuel. .........Live. Let me die for you" (P.245). Yakov's hallucination about Shmuel's death encourages him to live for the welfare of others. He determines to exist in the prison under the most degrading circumstances so that Shmuel and his fellow Jews may live. He rationalizes:

What do I get by dying, outside release from pain? What have I earned if a single Jew dies because I did? Suffering I can gladly live without, I hate the taste of it, but if I must suffer, let it be for something. Let it be for Shmuel" (P.245).
Yakov’s circle of compassion grows and he now wants to live, suffer and die not for his own benefit, but for Shmuel first and then for all the Jews. He now understands that his struggling and suffering is not personal, but historical, relating to all Jews. He fights for obtaining justice to him and thereby fights for the whole Jewish community. Thus Yakov’s quest moves from self-centredness to unselfish compassion towards others.

“To the goyim what one Jew is, what they all are. If the fixer stands accused of murdering one of their children, so does the rest of the tribe. Since the crucifixion the crime of the Christ-killer is the crime of all Jews” (P.245-246).

Though Yakov has not been a practising Jew with firm faith in God, he now identifies himself completely with the Jews and their suffering. Thus Malamud’s “work ultimately affirms his belief that through self – scrutiny, suffering and sympathy, man can recreate their humanity”.

His destiny will be the destiny of millions of Jews throughout the country. If he is found guilty, all the Jews throughout the country will be regarded as sinners. Then pogroms will be carried out and thousands of virtuous people would be crucified. ‘So what can Yakov Bok do about it?’ He asks himself. “He will protect them to the extent that he can. This is his covenant with himself. If God’s not a man he has to be. Therefore he must endure to the trial and let them confirm his innocence by their lies. He has no future but to hold on, wait it out” (P.246). Friedman says “This commitment becomes a commitment of meaningful existence for Yakov.”

In his resolution to undergo suffering for the sake of the Jews, Yakov gains a new meaning in
his life based on the moral strength of compassion. 'I shall live' he shouts in his cell, 'I'll wait, I'll come to my trial' (P.247).

With this renewed spirit earned through acute suffering, Yakov tries to fulfil his homely responsibilities. After a long time, his wife Raisl comes to the prison, to meet him. And he is filled with affinity and compassion towards her. With a compassionate mind, he ponders over the past life with her and gets rid of his early aversion for her. Then he gets ready to own her illegitimate child Chaim, as his own. But he shows no intention to sign the papers of confession regarding the murder of the Christian boy brought by Raisl. He does not sign and instead he writes on the paper that 'Every word is a lie'. Tony Tanner tells "He (Yakov) refuses to betray other people in the interest of personal comfort; and he willingly takes on the role of father to a child not his own. In the Malamud world, this is a heroic moment." In his imaginary encounter with the Tsar, Yakov affirms to the Tsar that he is the father 'with all my (his) heart'.

Yakov's rage towards the Tsar is genuine and legal. It arises from his acute suffering based on illegal accusation of a crime, which he has never committed. In one of the dream sequence, Yakov shoots the Tsar. This reinforces the fact that he has acquired the mental courage necessary to accept suffering as an integral part of his life. He also has learnt to react to suffering on humanitarian terms. Waking from the dream he thinks, "One thing I have learned, he thought, there's no such thing as an unpolitical man, especially a Jew. You can't be one without the other, that's clear.
enough" (P. 299). In *The Fixer*, the “process of moral and spiritual regeneration inevitably entails the transmutation of the private personality into political self.”\(^{57}\)

In another vision, Yakov sees a group of captives:

“Are you Jews or Russians?” The fixer asked them.

“We are Russian prisoners”.

“You look like Jews,” he said (P. 310).

Now he has understood that all prisoners are united in their suffering irrespective of their religion and nationality. Injustice disturbs all, whether a Jew or not. So he determines to suffer and sacrifice himself for the sake of all suffering humanity.

Thus by the end of the novel, Yakov learns to suffer not only for himself, but also for all the victims experiencing injustice of some kind or the other. And in this manner, he becomes the champion of the innocent, suffering humanity at all times to come. Helterman views it as “To be a Jew is to understand the suffering that God puts into the lives of all men. This understanding leads to goodness that must take the form of ‘rachmones’, pity, for other men, for other Jews, even for oneself. Without it, the suffering is meaningless and goodness non-existent.”\(^{58}\)

Hence *The Fixer* is not “a Jewish story primarily but a political story, ultimately about all men.”\(^{59}\) Thus the novel is “a statement of every Jew’s—every man’s—vulnerability to history”.\(^{60}\) Malamud’s “work ultimately affirms his belief that through self-scrutiny, suffering and sympathy, man can recreate their humanity.”\(^{61}\)
*Pictures of Fidelman* is a kind of picaresque novel depicting Fidelman's various roles as a researcher, painter, pilferer, forger and pimp. The varying features of Fidelman are manifested in six inter-related stories, which are made into a novel. In it also Malamud deals with the moral growth of Fidelman, which is the central theme in all his novels. Ben Siegel comments that in this novel Fidelman learns "less how to paint than how to live."\(^6\)

The first chapter 'Last Mohican', presents Fidelman when he is on his way to Italy for conducting his study on Giotto. He takes with him, the first chapter of Giotto in a brief case. His mind is thrilled with hope as he plans to lead a 'tightly organized life' devoting himself on books, paintings and museums. In Italy, he incidentally comes across Shimon Susskind, 'a person of about his own weight, oddly dressed in brown knickerbockers' who requests Fidelman his second best suit to wear. But Fidelman refuses to give. Fidelman's denial to give his second best suit to the poor Susskind exhibits his selfishness and lack of humanism. Even though Fidelman tries his level best to avoid him, Susskind follows him ceaselessly. Mark Goldman says. "He (Susskind) follows the pedantic art critic through Rome like the shadow of a history. Fidelman has forgotten in pursuit of a history he hardly understands."\(^6\) By susskind's relentless demand for the suit, Fidelman gets disturbed and says, "To my mind you are irresponsible and I won't be saddled with you. I have the right to choose my own problems and the right to my privacy."\(^6\)(P. 21). Fidelman does not like to get 'saddled' with
somebody's fate. He prefers to live his life in his own way and never likes to mingle with other people's private life.

Susskind pilfers and destroys his first chapter of the Giotto. By doing so, he redeems Fidelman as an artist and as a man. Fidelman who earlier disagreed to part with Susskind his suit, now grants him his suit charitably and even forgives Susskind for burning his manuscript on Giotto. Thus Susskind makes him aware of his commitment towards other people, as a Jew. Similarly Beppo destroys the paintings of Fidelman which he has kept with utmost care, and thereby teaches him to invent art. Beppo, the bisexual glass blower, once falls violently in love with Fidelman. And by that very incident, Fidelman learns to invent life.

In Malamud's opinion, art enlightens our outlook of life and it is never a run away from life's commitments. Fidelman gains this knowledge through Susskind and Beppo. While moving towards moral wisdom, Fidelman faces many ups and downs which Davenport sees as "variously hilarious and pathetic". And these experiences act as raw materials of his moral development. By the end, he becomes conscious of his own failures and inadequacies. His spiritual liberation from the prison of self takes place when he gives away his second best suit to Susskind, who has burnt his manuscript on Giotto. And towards the end of the novel, we find Fidelman visiting his dying sister. Helterman has remarked that Fidelman has "changed from a dabbler (one who fiddles around) to a man of faith (fidel) in love and life."
Fidelman looks for life in art, even though he has no credible experiences in life. He cannot find any inter-relation between life and art. Sarcastically he gets attached to the wall questions of great painters like Pollock which asked whether 'humanity is greater than art?' Even then Fidelman fails to realize the implication of these quotations. He makes serious attempt to find truth in art even as it is missing in his real life. According to Robert Ducharme, "Fidelman's obsession with the painting is too much to care for anything in life. This betrayal is in fact a betrayal of self." 17

In the last story 'Glass Blower of Venice', Fidelman due to his poverty keeps aside his art of painting. He takes up the job of a boatman and then carries passengers across the canals of Venice. During this period, Fidelman engages himself in an affair with Margherita. One day, while making love to Margherita, her husband Beppo accidentally arrives there. And the very moment he rapes Fidelman, teaching him the value of love. Beppo also liberates Fidelman from his false pretension that he is a great painter. Beppo advises him not to waste his life by striving hard to do what he cannot perform. "After twenty years if the rooster hasn't rowed she should know she's a hen. Your painting will never pay back the part of your life you have given up for it" (P. 134). Beppo and Fidelman work together till very late at night.

At last, Beppo's wife Margherita, requests Fidelman to leave her husband because she misses domestic peace when Fidelman is around.
Listen, Fidelman, we've been friends, let's stay friends. All I ask is that you leave Beppo and go some other place else. After all, in the eyes of God he is my husband. Now, because of you he is rarely around and my family is a mess. The boys are always in trouble, his mother complains all day, and I am at the end of my strength..... It isn't a perfect life but I've learned to be satisfied, and was more or less, before you come around.... it ended quickly, and to tell the truth I am worse off than I was before, so that's why I ask you to go" (P. 139-140).

Fidelman now feels concern for her. He readily obeys her and leaves for America. Ducharme has said that Fidelman's act is "an act of higher love that flows out of a broad sense of responsibility for others." ^68

Malamud's last novel *God's Grace*, shows his extreme concern regarding the self-destruction of civilization by a nuclear war. Through the character Calvin Cohn, the only survivor of a nuclear holocaust, Malamud reveals the fact that lust and greed progressively guide man to self-destruction. Once the war got over, Calvin Cohn tries his level best to establish a cultured society with the help of some chimpanzees, some baboons and a gorilla. But he cannot succeed in his desperate effort because there is no authentic moral code in an animal world. Religion also seems to be of no use in a world of inhumanity and selfishness. Even man, the supreme creation of God, has failed to be human. According to Malamud, the only way left for human race to exist in this world is "for people to respect and nourish each other now, during this life."^(69)

By the time the story begins, the world has come to an end because of atomic war. In the beginning, Cohn accuses God for the total destruction of mankind. But God replies him: "Man, after failing to use a sufficient
purpose his possibilities, and my goodwill, has destroyed himself.... They have destroyed my handiwork, the conditions of their survival....”^p.12). Then Cohn becomes aware of man’s failures and decides not to repeat those errors again. He then starts his struggle for existence with some apes. Even though the life with the apes turns out to be highly difficult, he cheers himself with the thought that life in the island is better than death.

Cohn, like many other Malamud’s protagonists, is not an orthodox Jew. His Judaism is reduced to the extent of simply an interest in God. However, on the island, he works hard to turn the apes into better Jews than he himself is. He acts as a teacher and institutes a ‘school tree’. He preaches to the animals that man has gone wrong because “man had failed each other in obligations and responsibilities – failed to achieve brotherhood, lost their lovely world, not to mention living lives” (P.119). The wiping away of mankind from this earth has taught him the value of life. He regards his telephone directory as ‘Book of the Dead’. His saying prayers of Kaddish for all dead people reveal his respect for life. He felt “the dead must be acknowledged if one respected life”(P.41).

Cohn’s difficulties in life begin with his sexual exploitation of Mary Madelyn, the female chimpanzee. By this very act, the other male chimpanzees become violent and act against him. Easu, one of the angry chimpanzees rapes Sara, a baboon and eats it after killing it. Cohn feels terribly sorry for his uncultured apes. The major theme of his teachings that “If you depreciate lives, the worth of your own diminishes”(P.174),
become useless. He feels hopeless and remarks "I have failed to teach these chimpanzees a basic truth" (P.183). Once Cohn kills a white ape by chance and that incident provides him the label of murderer. Later the apes kill Rebekkah, his daughter born of Mary, whom he hopes to be the apostle of a new, cultured civilization. Cohn gets terribly disappointed, while the apes laugh at him. Towards the end, in order to take revenge on Cohn, the apes assault on him. Then they carry him to the top of a mountain with a roll of firewood against his chest to burn him. Cohn has desperately failed in his attempt to improve the apes and instead has turned out to be a martyr. However, George the gorilla, has acquired the true spirit of jewishness. Cohn has emancipated himself and also George by delivering "a single soul before dying", as Morris Bober redeemed Frank Alpine, his erstwhile robber in 'The Assistant' through the agency of basic Jewish values. Thus at last, George the gorilla has cultivated the essence of jewishness. This means he has developed the moral values of truthfulness, goodness and humanism which all people are expected to follow.

Thus Malamud’s heroes are gifted with their own humanistic values even in the middle of adverse circumstances. It doesn’t mean that they are super human beings. They commit mistakes repeatedly, but they feel in their innermost mind that they should correct themselves, if they are to get peace of mind. Hence Malamud’s protagonists opt for the lesser evils. Ex: 'Morris Bober', the poor, old grocer in The Assistant forfeits the comfort and material prosperity of his family because he cannot take advantage of
others. But he deceives himself by envying his neighbour's material prospects and by wishing him ill luck. Later we find, he attempts to burn down the grocery store for collecting the insurance money. But his conscience troubles him and he gets his hands burnt while trying to put off the fire. Thus Malamud’s protagonists select the lesser evil if they are provided with the chance of betraying themselves and others.

The disadvantaged persons in Malamud’s world are not the poor and the unlucky, but the self-centred and the inhuman people. Ex:-In The Bill, Willy Schlegal regrets the fact that he has failed to repay Panessa, the poor and ill-fated storekeeper. Similarly in The Loan, Lieb, a successful baker acts as his wife’s suggestion and refuses to give an old friend some money. But later he becomes sensitive about it and feels guilty. On the other hand, the human, compassionate people always win a moral victory. Ex:-'Yakov Bok', an innocent man is imprisoned in the jail for a crime, he actually did not commit. By acting in a disciplined manner and by demanding justice, Bok threatens the anti-Semitic bureaucracy. By his non-violent protest, he gains the respect of his fellow Jews and even some Russians, who become ready to sacrifice their lives for him.

In Malamud’s fiction, as a character becomes aware of his own self, he becomes compassionate to other fellow people. And a Jew in Malamud’s fiction means a suffering and understanding human individual. According to Malamud, suffering is the common destiny of the whole mankind. We are bound together by our miseries and defeats of the past, the indignities of
the present and the threats of the future. Now, mankind as a whole should
strive hard to engrave in our minds and instill in our actions "what it
means human". The only possible way to eradicate suffering is that all
men should accept responsibility of one another, as the inevitable aspect of
suffering unites all human beings. In other words, Malamud accepts
Dostoevsky's idea that "everyone is responsible for everything and for all
men.... and for all things".

Malamud creates in his fiction, universal archetypes by mingling the
Jews with the gentiles. By doing so, he urges all human beings irrespective
of caste or colour, to develop the highest standard of goodness. Also
Malamud uses his fiction as a medium to emphasize the need to be
compassionate to other people. His characters, even though tormented by
suffering and ill luck, assume the responsibility of others. "All through
Malamud's stories runs this persistent theme: man is his brother's keeper
because it is only in 'keeping one's brother that he really becomes a man'.
Thus all of Malamud's heroes mature in the same way: they learn to see....
and inimical viewpoint.... an then embrace it in an overt or implicit act of
love." 

Compassion provides an appreciative attitude to life. It calls for inter-
personal commitment, strengthened by love, suffering and mutual
understanding. Malamud proves through his fiction the truth that however
pathetic be one's life surroundings, he can still reinforce his humanity. And
that the meaning of humanism lies not in isolation but in collectivity.
Notes and References


5. Leslie Field and Joyce Field, BMACCE, P. 7.


22. Sidney Richman, BM, P.36.

23. Ibid., P. 37.


41. Sidney Richman, BM, P. 84.


47. Joseph Featherstone, "Bernard Malamud", *Atlantic*, 219, No.3 (March 1967) P.97; here after cited as 'Atlantic' in this chapter.

48. Bernard Malamud *The Fixer*, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1979; P.14 All further references in this chapter are to this edition indicated by page numbers parenthetical in the text.


51. Jeffrey Helterman, Understanding Bernard Malamud, (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1985), P.74; here after cited as 'UBM' in this chapter.


58. Jeffrey Helterman, UBM, P. 79.


64. Bernard Malamud ‘Pictures of Fidelman’, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1980, P.21 All further references in this chapter are to this edition indicated by page numbers parenthetical in the text.


68. Ibid P. 137.


