CHAPTER TWO

THE VICTIM

Saul Bellow can be truly termed as an optimist but he should most appropriately be addressed as a humanist. He is the real apostle of humanity. He peeped into the psyche of a common man, and gave his principles in the form of the novels. Each novel facilitates a new entrance into the absurd and bleak world. Surprisingly, his protagonists are able to find a positive outlook even after lots of struggle. Here lies Bellow’s forte. He is an ardent artist and can create decent life pattern out of muddy thick of absurdity and negativity. The second novel of Saul Bellow, *The Victim*, was published in 1947. It is a story of the quest for identity in modern bewildered world. Asa Leventhal, the protagonist, is the victim of self-doubt. He needs others’ opinion to be sure of his own intentions. But, at last, he turns out to be a stronger and self-acknowledged person.

Asa Leventhal is an editor of a minor Manhattan trade magazine. He is a large, stolid-looking man, inclined to be rather short in speech, but his abruptness of manner actually masks a deep sense of personal vulnerability. In spite of his comfortable income, his six years with Burke Beard Publications, Leventhal is unable to erase from his mind the memory of the depression. Similarly, he is unable to forget that his mother has died in a mental hospital. Rather, he is obsessed with his mother’s insanity; terrified that it may be hereditary and worried that the madness may already be in him, he remains constantly on the watch for signs of emergence.
Leventhal is spending the summer alone in New York because his wife Marry is out of town helping her mother. Jonathan Wilson writes that Leventhal feels helpless in the style of a fifties bachelor. Wilson further discusses that Leventhal’s troubles are multiplied by the fact that his brother, Max, whom Leventhal regards as highly irresponsible, has taken off to find work in Texas. In absence of his brother, Leventhal is obliged to assume some of the burden of his brother’s family. When Leventhal is first introduced in the beginning of the fiction, he has just returned from a visit to his sister-in-law, Elena, who has a sick child. Thus, “sickness, madness, and hysteria are on Leventhal's mind when Allbee steps into his path and Leventhal’s real trials begin” (Wilson 56).

It is through Kirby Allbee that Asa achieves an awakening. Asa’s charges provide a good opportunity to Leventhal for self-inspection and to know what he is. Several years before the novel opens, Kirby Allbee has secured Asa Leventhal an interview with his employer, Mr. Rudiger. Whether at Leventhal’s instigation or from natural maliciousness, Mr. Rudiger mercilessly attacked the young man, and Asa, in turn, flew back at him with all the stored-up vehemence of weary, fruitless months of job seeking. Shortly after this encounter, Kirby Allbee was fired. Years later, having exhausted his dead wife’s insurance money, Allbee returned as a kind of alter ego antagonist to remind Asa of his guilt. During their initial confrontations, Allbee just wished to accuse Leventhal that he was not only instrumental in losing him his job but was also responsible for his divorce and the subsequent death of his wife in a road accident. Later, he demanded monetary support and other compensations from Leventhal.
Bellow uses the twin events of the death of Leventhal’s nephew and the jarring conflict with Allbee to portray a period of self-examination and growth in the life of the protagonist. By the end of the novel, Leventhal has softened up, released some of his childhood fears of isolation and betrayal and is described as looking years younger. Moreover, his wife rejoins him removing the dreary ambience of alienation from his life. The end of the book includes a brief meeting between Leventhal and his old tormentor, Allbee. The latter’s fortunes have reversed apparently; he is dating a richly attired Hollywood actress. Allbee hails Leventhal who is reluctant to visit their old quarrels. But Allbee is as persistent as ever but with a difference. He apologizes for his past rudeness and comes close to asking Leventhal’s forgiveness. This reconciliation appears to be more a function of the increase of Allbee’s good fortune than a result of true enlightenment. They part from each other politely as the novel closes.

Bellow made Leventhal, an ordinary person, the protagonist of his second novel because he wanted to represent a puzzled modern man with his worthless anxieties. It was his effort to enumerate the causes of human anxieties through his different characters. Without being a moralizer, Bellow depicts the puzzles of an ordinary human mind. His depiction has been of great value to his readers. There is a question which occurs to one’s mind after reading his fiction whether the problem really exist or is just the creation of human mind. In modern twentieth century America, the more important conflict is inside a man instead of being outside. The American society is developed and people no longer struggle for their basic needs—food, clothing or shelter. The struggle has not remained
physical but intellectual. Now, society is facing the question of religion, social responsibility and individuality. In his quest for identity, a modern man has turned into an agnostic fool. Leventhal is deprived of any heroic qualities but well suited to Bellow's purpose of reflecting over the real cause of suffering of a modern American.

Being a student of anthropology, Bellow was interested in human relationships, their failure and social environment in general. *The Victim* is an attempt to portray the psychology of a common person living in America during the World War II. Moreover, Leventhal is the member of Jewish community, which suffered the most during the war. The Ghetto experience was fresh memory for the Jews in 1947. James Atlas writes:

Yet the novel is suffused with a consciousness of that unprecedented crime. In a dream, Leventhal sees himself in a crowded railroad station, with a loudspeaker blaring and guards pushing people into the trains—a nightmarish scenario that instantly summons up the Nazi transports of Jews to the death camps. And Allbee’s halfhearted attempt to kill himself—and Leventhal—by turning on the gas in Leventhal’s kitchen is a symbolic enactment (through suicide rather than murder) of the Final solution. (126)

Thus, the uncongenial situations for the Jews have been reflected in the fiction either through dialogues or through incidents. Bellow might have had someone
as his inspiration in his mind for Leventhal. And if this is not the case, surely his observation into the psyche of a post-war Jew is meticulous.

One can imagine the impact of modern psychology on Bellow. Most of Bellow’s heroes can be evaluated as the victim of the Ego. Here, the Ego is not used in Freudian sense, but it is used in Lacanian sense. For Freud, the Ego is a rational faculty and is essential for mutual balance between the Id and the Superego. But for Jacques Lacan, the Ego is the ideal image for which a human being always craves since his childhood. As Lacan postulates, the real self is not a fix set of characteristics but an ever-changing flow. One always desires for some ideality in one’s life. According to Lacan, these Ego problems start in the mirror stage, in which an infant perceives the difference between the image of a unified body in the mirror and his actual physical vulnerability. This difference creates the Ego or the ideal self with which the child begins to associate himself. In this sense, the Ego is derived from the ideal self, which is ‘the other’ to the real self. The Ego, which is formulated in the mirror stage, results in never ending craving for an ideal self. One always struggles to capture idealism in one’s life. Being unable to fulfill this desire one feels frustrated and anxious of failure. Leventhal has an ideal image of himself as a good human being, who never commits mistakes. In his ideal image, he is responsible, lovable and generous. This is the image he wants to maintain before society. Leventhal feels guilty for what has happened. Rather, he feels that others may have a low opinion of him because of what he has done to Allbee and that if he helps Allbee it might improve the opinion his friends hold of him. Leventhal is continually motivated not
by what he thinks is right but by what he believes others will think of him. Allbee soon becomes the unwanted guest at Leventhal’s home. He demands for increasingly intrusive favors from Leventhal. Allbee is never grateful for Leventhal’s help; he continues to blame him for his misfortune and to suggest that there is a Jewish conspiracy against him.

Furthermore, there is no set of objective truth which one can claim as one’s reality as suggested by Lacan. On the contrary, one gets aware of oneself through other’s opinions. Other’s opinions work as a mirror to one’s personality. Lacan stresses “there is no subject except in representation, but that no representation captures us completely. I can neither be totally defined nor can I escape all definition. I am the quest for myself” (“Lacanian”). As a Deconstructionist, Lacan dissolves all boundaries and denies the existence of self except in the mind. Bellow thinks in the similar manner as he ends his fiction without much outer incidents. The plot of The Victim consists of mental arguments of Leventhal, who struggles to save an ideal projected self before others. In accordance to Lacan’s Views, one may discern that Leventhal tries to save something which does not exist; and if exists is constantly changing. Leventhal like, everyone else, is defined by others. In this sense, when others start to have adverse and harassing views regarding his action, his image automatically gets changed. Others’ views regarding one are just like a mirror, one needs to see one’s face. That is why Leventhal starts doubting himself when doubted by others. Before Allbee comes into his life he has no idea regarding
him. As Allbee reenters in his life with a list of blames, he is curious to know others’ response.

According to Lacan there is no fixed set of objective reality. The moment one admits, “I am like that,” one turns oneself into object, which remains unchanged. But the reality of human life is its transitoriness; it is changing every moment. Because the self is ever-changing phenomenon, one cannot attribute certain trait to a particular person. In other words, the nature is changing every moment. The application of Lacan’s views on Leventhal’s pursuit proves his struggle a foolish one. Leventhal’s search for an ideal social identity is an effort to catch water in the fist.

Existentialism may provide a more elaborate case study of Leventhal’s psychological struggle. According to Jean Paul Sartre, there are three modes of consciousness—being-in-itself, being-for-itself and being-for-others. A human being can be either in the category of being-for-itself or being-for-others but one always craves for becoming being-in-itself, which is a lifeless situation unattainable by a living human being. One’s perpetual craving results into our never ending failure. Human being wants to be perfect and to remain forever in the state of perfection. This is unreal and unachievable dream pursued by every being. First, the state of perfection is a fallacy for in every condition further improvements are possible. Secondly, if one happens to be really close to perfection, one can never be in the same condition for ever. Thus, every being craves for the condition of Being-in-itself; in other words, every being wants to turn oneself into a lifeless object. This ironical desire is the cause of several
psychological responses, which makes the condition of human being miserable. Leventhal desires for perfection or ideality. His frustration is caused by his helplessness. His anguish represents the irony of human existence.

Leventhal struggles initially because he hesitates in accepting responsibility for himself. But there are ways of escaping this anguish, for by attempting to conceal his freedom to himself, the individual may delude himself into thinking that he cannot help it if his life is miserable. In this case the individual shirks responsibility for himself and instead he clings to some transcendent belief in destiny. This is what Sartre calls ‘mauvaise foi’ (bad faith). Bad faith consists in pretending that we are not free; that we are somehow determined, that we cannot help doing what we do. Role playing is thus an indication of bad faith. In an attempt to escape the burden of freedom and of the personal responsibility which it entails, the individual flees into bad faith.

Leventhal’s deeper fears come from an uncertainty about his position and stability in the cruel, indifferent chaos of modern city. The Victim indicates that the victimization of Leventhal is the result of his own weakness. His self-doubt and lack of self-confidence led him to abnormal reactions at several times. As once his wife Mary said to him “That’s because you’re not sure of yourself. If you were a little more sure you wouldn’t let yourself be bothered” (Bellow 185). In the modern scenario, a man has got aloof from its roots; he does not respect any social moral or religious institutions; he is aware of the dark side of his psyche and wants to follow free will. On the other hand, he is nostalgic towards the state of happiness and is inclined to achieve goodness. On the whole the struggle may
be termed as the struggle between social responsibility and individual choice which is a very old theme. Crushed between the two extremes, man is incapable to decide anything and keep on deferring his decision until he is pushed by circumstances into final showdown. Leventhal keeps on speculating his own guilt in relation to Allbee’s misfortune but even after endless reflections he is unable to decide the extent of his responsibility. Here one can make a comparison between Hamlet and Leventhal. Though there is no match in their status and strength, but they have a common weakness, over-brooding. Hamlet is highly intellectual and brave-hearted and Leventhal is a weakling. But both think too much. That causes passivity.

Thus, it is Leventhal’s inner weakness that allowed Allbee to dominate him. He gradually begins to speculate over his unintended guilt and starts thinking himself as being guilty of his accuser’s misfortune. He starts helping Allbee to come out of his guilt and at the same time to rescue his reputation among his friends. He fears that if all his friends presume him guilty of Allbee’s misfortune, their favors towards him will be ended and his reputation will come to a naught. As discussed before, the Ego is the result of an infant’s craving for an ideal symmetrical and harmonious image in the mirror. Leventhal also craves for an image of respectable social being. Because once his ideal image is hurt, his friends will not think highly of him. That, in turn, will decide Leventhal’s self-image. Thus, Leventhal is anxious to save his ideal image before the society. He wants his ego to remain intact.
Though the present fiction can be studied through psychological and philosophical points of view, religion inserts an extraordinary insight into it. Leventhal scrutinizes the situation with an aptitude towards self-doubt, an individual weakness as well as a peculiar trait of Jewish mind in late 1940s. The key motif of the novel turns into the conflict between anti-Semite and Jew. The book highly indicates the Jewish framework of Leventhal’s mind. The experience of holocaust filled most of the Jews with a troubling sense of disgrace and human demotions. It was greatly afflicting to the Jews, who lost their self-respect and started considering themselves as hopeless victims incapable of honorable self-defense. This feeling gave birth to a disparaging sense of personal contamination and aversion. Through his arguments Allbee frequently belittles Leventhal due to his being a Jew. In one of his argument Allbee passes derogatory comments:

It’s necessary for you to believe that I deserve what I get. It doesn’t enter your mind, does it—that a man might not be able to help being hammered down? What do you say? Maybe he can’t help himself? No, if a man is down, a man like me, it’s his fault. If he suffers, he’s being punished. There’s no evil in life itself. And do you know what? It’s a Jewish point of view. You will find it all over the Bible. God doesn’t make mistakes. He’s the department of weights and measures. If you’re okay, he’s okay, too. That’s what Job’s friends come and say to him. But I’ll tell you something. We do get it in the neck for nothing and suffer for nothing, and there’s no denying that evil is as real as sunshine. (Bellow 260)
Even after listening to such comments Leventhal remained calm and passive to some extent with uncomprehending and horrified expressions. Leventhal could only falter out, “I don’t see how you can talk that way. That’s just talk. Millions of us have been killed. What about that?” (260-261). His self-disgust is discernible from the episode in which he confronts the mother-in-law of his brother Max. Her strict Catholicism, Italian hoarseness and rude inobservance of Leventhal’s presence led him to surmise hidden hatred for Jewish community in her heart. Max had married her daughter and left her to survive on her own with her two children. Bellow describes his speculations over the situation, “The marriage was impure to her. Yes, he understood how she felt about it. A Jew, a man of wrong blood, of bad blood, had given her daughter two children and that was why this was happening” (Bellow 192). It seems that after the holocaust, the conscience of Leventhal pecks him all the time for being a member of passive Jewish community.

As Allbee blames Leventhal, he first dismisses very harshly. He answered the accusation with firm negation. But as Leventhal has been portrayed a weak character, soon his self-image starts changing in the light of other’s comments. Allbee remains hovering over the mind of Leventhal. Allbee is proud of being an heir of Governor Winthrop and demoralizes Leventhal for being a Jew from Russia or Poland. He frequently makes disparaging remarks about Leventhal’s Jewish mentality. When Leventhal accuses Allbee for being a heavy boozer and surmises that the main cause of losing the job together with his wife may have been his drinking habit, Allbee remarks:
You are 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. (Bellow 203-204)

He strongly feels the truth in Allbee’s accusation. Though Leventhal is not able to decide the extent to which he should blame himself but he is sure that he is not innocent; this realization makes him weak enough to let Allbee intrude in his life. Here, a rational reader can definitely observe the strength and opportunistic attitude shown by Allbee. Allbee is a true representative of modern materialistic man who after capturing another man’s weak point, makes the best possible advantage out of it. Though facing the worst misfortune, Allbee has strength enough to victimize Leventhal. Allbee has lost his job; he is probably black-listed; he has lost his wife; he has no money for further survival, still he possesses enough strength to victimize the vulnerable Leventhal. Throughout the fiction, Allbee causes pain and difficulty to Leventhal who seems to be stronger but in actuality much weaker and prone to be victim.

Thus, Allbee is smart enough to prove him right even if he is behaving against the socially and morally accepted code of conduct. In this way, he frequently harasses Leventhal by his philosophic and emphatic reflections. As a
result Leventhal becomes insecure and incapable to prove his innocence. At one place, he suggests Leventhal,

Because you people take care of yourself before everything. You keep your spirit under knock and key. That’s the way you’re brought up. You make it your business assistant, and it’s safe and tame and never leads you toward anything risky. Nothing dangerous and nothing glorious. Nothing ever tempts you to dissolve yourself. what for? What's in it? No percentage. (Bellow 260)

In their arguments Leventhal is incapable to speak much of his mind in comparison to Allbee’s impressive statement. He hears Allbee with a sense of gullibility and starts revising his own intentions. Lacking in confidence of his motives, he is unable to speak but just listens passively. Passivity is a remarkable trait of modern human being. The absurd rootlessness has given birth to a man who is unable to act, to decide, to enjoy, to sleep and at last unable to be in the state of happiness. He has become a victim of insomnia, paranoia and other psychic diseases. Leventhal's accentuated Jewishness also confuses him to the point of inaction when he is confronted by the anti-Semitic Allbee.

He is neurotically quick to sense or imagine a threat, a slight, an insult, a look of blame and accusation, or a general hostility. He feels threatened, spied on, and is beset by endless misgivings and apprehensions. These feelings, of course, are concentrated during his relationship with Allbee who indeed does
track him, spy on him, insult him and invade his very being. But they are the feelings Leventhal is habitually prone to. When he goes with Philip in the thronged zoo to spend his holiday, he is extraordinarily sensitive towards the danger of being watched. Bellow describes: “he was able to see himself as if through a strange pair of eyes: the side of his face, the palpitation in his throat, the seams of his skin, the shape of his body and of his feet in their white shoes” (229). And the thinking of being scrutinized makes him feel depressive.

Leventhal, being a Jew, gives much importance to suffering. Greater suffering ensures greater depth in the character. It is from this point of view that Leventhal has a soft corner for Allbee despite his baseless accusations. It is true that Allbee is a greater sufferer than Leventhal. That’s the reason why Leventhal respects him. But the moment he realizes that Allbee is taking undue advantage of his generosity making Leventhal a greater sufferer than him. Leventhal throws him out of his life and never turns back. Thus, the Jewish psychology of Leventhal can be surmised at the back of each of his action. When Allbee enters in his life, Leventhal is himself restless. His thinking capacity is already under suspicion for he is always thinking of hereditary symptoms of madness in his family. In such situation, he suddenly meets Allbee who is on the road and who has nothing to lose further. At this point he indulges in the psychological debate. His faith in his goodness was already in question and Allbee increases the doubt with his accusations. But most of the struggle is inside the mind.
Leventhal’s quest for identity brings him in a labyrinth. His subjectivity depends on others. In this sense, everyone is all mutually dependent on others for one’s own different identity. This thought appears contradictory, but well supported by Hegel’s theory of Master and slave relationship. According to Hegel, the master and the slave are locked in a mutual struggle for recognition. One cannot exist without recognition of the other, but at the same time the other also requires his/her own recognition. In other words, master can’t be a master without a slave. Thus, he is dependent on the slave for his identity as a master. Here again we can explain this relationship as a mirror reflection.

But the question remains the same about the optimistic end which Bellow has given to *The Victim*. In the last, Allbee is resettled with a Hollywood actress and Leventhal is waiting for the birth of his first child. They both have left their grudges far behind. One may discern that ever-moving cycle of time has blurred the memory of Leventhal and Allbee. To some extent the time-factor is essential in the recovery of Leventhal’s mental health, but Bellow surely wants to indicate some greater truths through the ends of his novels. Bellow has unshakable faith in human tendency to recover from any sort of mental or physical stress. Bellow’s vision is given suggestively rather than being explicitly discussed in his writings. Though he is optimistic, his optimism is not unnatural. He does not view human life as a bed of roses. He contemplates over the hardships and the negativity of life; he acknowledges the dark side of human psyche and is aware of modern neurosis and other mental disorders. He presents a modern man who has not been capable to erase self-doubt and mental vacuum. But, at the same time, he
never refuses that man has capacity to overcome his weaknesses. As discussed earlier, the struggle is all in mind. The moment Leventhal’s mind frees itself from various perceptions of others, he gets rid of Allbee. The moment Leventhal’s mind is confirmed that Allbee is no longer a sufferer, his respect for Allbee diminishes. The moment of reconciliation with his brother brought a sense of relief for Leventhal and his perception that his brother would blame him for the death of his nephew is cleared. In the fiction Leventhal becomes a prisoner of his several perceptions. When those perceptions are proved wrong, he acts as a more solid and intellectual person. One may conclude that Bellow tries to show the intellectuals the result of self-doubt as in twentieth century most of the intellectuals have lost their faith in humanity. They are lost somewhere in the land of meaningless nihilism. As Robert R. Dutton writes in the preface of his book Saul Bellow,

It is not Bellow’s opinion that these novelists have presented inaccurate reflections of what it means to be human; it is just that there are other truths to be told: man is capable of integrity; he can live in dignity. Man has a power that is, say, subangelic: he is removed from the angels, but he is in a position on a “chain of being” that calls for more hope than despair.

Though Bellow is not a preacher, he shows the ill consequences of this doubt on human mind and finally on human life. Doubt is deadly; it makes man nothing more than an unfortunate burden of unsolved puzzles. Thus, Bellow
advocates faith in human qualities. One should note that Bellow is not a moralist. If one talks about human qualities, it does not refer to social morality. It also does not mean that Bellow is a conventional novelist who enranges on the violation of established wisdom. He doesn’t want any elaborate discussion on what morality is. In his personal life too, Bellow lived as a free thinker. On the contrary, he is influenced with existential thinking, which has nothing to do with socially accepted code of moral behavior. He is a humanist. He wants to save the lost dignity of human beings. He wants to restore faith in humanity. Yet he has not clarified his point elaborately. He ends the fiction with an optimistic note, but this optimism comes only in the last few pages. Throughout the fiction, the protagonist is amid psychological struggle. Suddenly mind establishes equilibrium. It accepts its painful condition as reality and unavoidable situation.

Bellow’s writings are an answer to those nihilistic and absurdist writers who can never view anything reasonable in the life of a man. An absurdist thinks that man is an unintelligent being in this alien universe. There is no meaning behind his actions. Each day from morning to evening he is busy in fighting for his survival, yet his struggle never ends. It ends only with death. Everybody is craving for something. Most of the time, the object of craving is not known. Thus an absurdist mocks at human life brutally. Bellow writes in opposition to such approach towards life. According to Bellow, human life is not illogical. Rather, one’s life is the result of one’s own action. In this sense every action has a cause behind it. Whether it is existentialist point of view or Lacanian psychology, all assure that the one’s life can be explained as the result of one’s actions. They all
claim that there is cause and effect relationship. Thus, life is meaningful. Existentialists argue that if a person does not accept his responsibility, he is showing bad faith. Lacan discusses the clashes of real and ideal self as the cause of misery. In this way, he also delivers the responsibility of sufferings on human shoulders. But one can win this conflict by recognizing the ideal as the unreal self. The moment a person realizes the difference between ideal and real self and leaves craving for the ideal, he can have a satisfactory existence.

Though there is remote possibility that Bellow had Buddhism in his mind while writing his fiction, one can easily notice the parallel between the two thoughts. Buddhist, too, searches the cause of misery inside a man i.e. desire. If the cause of suffering is human being, then the remedy also lies within a human being. Buddhism preaches to sacrifice desire to gain peace and satisfaction. And here comes the optimistic side of various theories. Suffering is inevitable. Everyone has to suffer or suffering is inbuilt in our structure. Bellow’s Jewish religion, too, supports this statement. Moreover for a Jew, the greater the sufferings and the better the person will be. But this suffering is structural and is the result of one’s own action rather than the result of some metaphysical and unintelligible processes. Bellow can be related to these thinkers because he is a believer in human capabilities.

There is a point where Bellovian psychology, Lacan’s psycho-analysis, existential thinking and Buddhist philosophy co-relate. They all contend the changing nature of the world. For Lacan individual’s real self is ever evolving and never fixed. The same individual is given the status of being-for-itself instead of
being-in-itself because of its consciousness that keeps changing. Similarly, Buddhists perceive the world as an ever-changing phenomenon. For them, every minutest particle is changing each second. There is relation between Lacan’s the Ego and Sartre’s bad faith. Bad faith is essential for saving one’s ego. The responsibility of misfortune may destroy one’s ideal image. On the other hand, if one’s actions are not the cause of one’s struggle, one becomes a subject of sympathy. This social sympathy satisfies one’s feeling of selfhood. Allbee is the victim of bad faith. He tries to shift his guilt on Leventhal. This technique may save his social image, in other words, it may save his ego. This problem is solved in the last when Allbee realizes his mistakes and almost apologizes to Leventhal. Similarly, at last, Leventhal quits the struggle of gaining an ideal image among his friends.

Leventhal’s doubt is self-created. During the two World Wars Jews had to suffer a lot. But it was Leventhal’s weakness that he let the memories overcome his present. He did everything he could do to save his nephew’s life. But due to his doubt he thinks himself a guilty of irresponsibility. In consequence, he takes extra burden on his psyche. His faith in himself is shaken and that accelerates his submission to Allbee’s accusations. It’s his mind’s creation that his brother’s Italian mother-in-law despises him for being a Jew. Had he been strong from the start, Allbee could not create such a great turmoil in Leventhal’s life. Finally, when he is pushed into action by circumstances, he suddenly gets out of his ideal image within a minute. And he restores the balance in his life after getting rid of Allbee. Nothing much important happens externally. But the whole play is
that of mind. Here, a literary student may be reminded of the emphatic speech of Satan in *Paradise Lost*, “The mind is its own place, and in itself/Can make a Heav’n of Hell, a Hell of Heav’n” (Milton 12). Though this is much old wisdom, but has much inspiration for the modern world. It seems that Bellow’s effort is to provide the same insight in the form of fiction. It is Leventhal, who makes his life hellish due to his doubt and indecision. Moreover the same Leventhal is finally able to restore heavenly peace in his life when he decides to do it.

The psychological and philosophical approaches give a profound insight into the sufferings of Allbee. First, he is the victim of bad Faith. He transfers the responsibility of his own misfortune to Leventhal. Allbee brings various explanations so that he may avoid the burden of responsibility and receive other’s sympathy. This sympathy strengthens his ego because it proves that he is an innocent sufferer. He does not deserve such hard luck. But as one knows from Leventhal’s dialogue, Allbee’s drinking is the most important cause of losing his job. His own irresponsible behavior causes his wife’s death and further misfortunes. But just to save his social as well as personal image of goodness, Allbee scares of accepting his mistakes. But in the last he, to some extent, accepts his responsibility. His reaction, in the last chapter of *The Victim*, is described as if he wants to say sorry to Leventhal. Now in the Last Allbee is at peace. Perhaps now he accepts himself the ever-known truth that he himself was the cause of his downfall. One can say that Allbee, too, made his life hellish in order to be ideally innocent and later on he himself is able to make his life heavenly with acceptance of truth.
According to Bellow, human mind has all the strength. It can sink the person in to bottomless abyss. And it can put him on inconceivable heights. Through Leventhal and Allbee Bellow has shown an extraordinary faith in human beings. A man alone is able to rise or fall. The choice is one’s own. He can choose to live a dignified life that comes through acceptance of truth, and he can choose to live a fatalist’s life who always waits for something to change. The power according to Bellow lies in a Man’s hand for it is the man who is to decide. Thus, Bellow’s thinking can be explained as that of an existentialist who believes only in concrete human existence. Bellow’s truth, too, is crystal clear. Bellow does not approve the classical definition of a hero to be true. His protagonist is an ordinary man fighting with himself and the world around. The truth of Bellow’s protagonist is that he is not a champion of virtues. Rather, he himself is imperfect. He himself is the cause of his misery. Further, Bellow views life as full of struggle. And this struggle is inescapable for it is rooted in the imperfect nature of humanity. This imperfection does not harass Bellow for he believes in the human capacity to bear its consequences. Human being’s will of survival stops him from surrendering before the hardships of life. Bellow appreciates this will of survival and loves to write in support of it.
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