

## Dostoevsky's Influence on Saul Bellow in the Context of Urbanization and Materialism

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*Abstract: Fyodor Mikhailov Dostoevsky (1821- 81), the nineteenth Century modern realistic novelist, in his art and prophetic message has influenced the twentieth century American Jewish novelist Saul Bellow (1915-2015), a Nobel Laureate, in a post war, post-depression era. Despite their distinctive backgrounds or different nationality, time setting, socio- political environment, both of them have depicted urban materialism, homelessness and existential predicament of their protagonists. They protest against dehumanization, faithlessness and hopelessness of their times. Dostoevsky in an atheist, modern, materialist Russia dreamt of a world where Christian spirituality combined with Russian cultural heritage may restore peace and happiness. In Dostoevsky's oeuvre the urban metropolis pulsates with its crowd. Dostoevsky in his works exposes the urban misery, the individual predicament in a modern city St. Petersburg. In this respect, Dostoevsky influences Bellow since almost all of Bellow's novels take place in city background. New York and Chicago these mega cities are the most common settings for Bellow's novels. The protagonists of Bellow are 'orphans of time.' In this context, my study will observe how the Russian novelist Dostoevsky has influenced the American novelist Saul Bellow from the perspective of urbanization and materialism.*

*Keywords: Bellow, Dostoevsky, Influence, Materialism, Urbanization.*

### Introduction

The theme of urbanization and materialism is one of the most crucial aspects of both Dostoevsky and Bellow's works. The Russian titan figure of world literature, Dostoevsky immensely influences the Post world war, Jewish American writer Bellow's works in this respect. Both the writer's canons reveal that the moral basis of society has become

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weak in the maze of materialistic aspirations and utilitarian philosophy. And hence the idyllic happiness of simplicity, bounty and serenity is lost. The western modern world being forgetful of the prophets' spiritual and moral teachings is on the way to perish and thus suffer chaos. Dostoevsky in his works exposes urban misery, angst and ennui and individual predicament in a modern materialistic society like nineteenth century St. Petersburg, the dream of Czar, Peter the Great (1672- 1725). Dostoevsky with great craftsmanship and psychological insight has penetrated the problematic moods and ideas of the homeless, alienated intellectuals. His protagonists undergo spiritual, social, intellectual crisis which is not very different than those of our time. His homeless intellectuals from many perspectives influence many of the Bellow protagonists. Megacities like New York and Chicago are the most common settings for Bellow's novels and the protagonists of Bellow are 'orphans of time'. They are children suffering from homelessness in a post-war, post-depression era. The heroes of both the works encounter existential trauma and they search for peace, truth and happiness. Money plays a pivotal role in the canons of both the authors. Materialistic ambition of modern society needs the power of money. Sometimes lack of money results to the endless humiliations of the people suffering from the 'crushing' poverty. Sometimes money becomes an instrument of torture inflicted by the upper stratum upon the lower stratum. As if the powerful class is trying to devour the powerless class. Class struggle is a common feature of both the oeuvres. Both the authors reveal the dismal picture about how the materialistic heartlessness turns human beings act irrationally, cruelly, mechanically and sometimes perversely as if they are lunatics to be put to asylum or need psychological therapy. Moreover, both Dostoevsky and Bellow are against violence. They do not encourage violence for any social reformation. Dostoevsky says "The revolutionist is a doomed man..." [5]. Bellow also discourages violence when in "The French As Dostoevsky Saw Them" he says "If wars could bring substantial changes, would we not all be deeply altered. If death and suffering had the power to teach us, would we of this century not all be wiser than our fathers?" [13]. Both Dostoevsky and Bellow urge a spiritual reawakening for individuals. In this connection I would like to quote from an essay, "Bernard Malamud: An American Reading of Feodor Dostoevsky" by Gabriella Morisco where she speaks of the New York Jewish- American 'intelligentsia' who felt a bonding with the Russian writer Dostoevsky after the Second World War and

found Dostoevsky's St. Petersburg cityscape and his protagonists influencing Bellow's works:

As a consequence of ... cultural fragmentation, these intellectuals obviously identified with certain characters portrayed by Dostoevsky, with men experiencing a condition of profound uneasiness and torment caused by all the antinomies peculiar to an age of transition; they are pale, unstable heroes walking the crowded street of St. Petersburg, as well as Brooklyn or Manhattan, with the bewildered, lost look of foreigners approaching a proreform urban reality. Through their reading of Dostoevsky, Bellow and Malamud, in particular, drew disquieting parallels between the narrow streets, the shops, the miserable rented rooms in the popular areas of St. Petersburg and those of the Lower East Side and the New York ghetto;" [ 3]

Before examining the oeuvres of the two authors I would like to make a brief discussion of the two social, historical and political backdrops against which the works are set.

Nineteenth century, the context of Dostoevsky's creative art, is marked by urbanization throughout Europe. Russia, a country of vast territory and geographically attached to Europe was naturally influenced by the nineteenth century European materialistic zeal and outlook. Nineteenth century Russia underwent much political, social and economic turmoil which created a challenging background for Dostoevsky's writing. The significant historical, political and social moments like the fall of Napoleon in 1815, the Greek war of independence ( 1821- 1828 ), merging of Germany with Italy to meet their shared political aims and aspirations, Industrial Revolution which started in England in the eighteenth century, poverty stricken communal peasants moving from village to cities in search of work, one segment of the society becoming very rich and the other, like factory workers suffering deplorable financial conditions, rise of the middle class and their growing power, all contributed to the rapid progression of urbanization. Moreover, the publication of Darwin's *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* (1859) had great effect on the outlook of the scientists, intellectuals and ordinary people since the spiritual influence of Christianity grew weak. In consequence of all these powerful influences, approach to life became materialistic and utilitarian. The society suffered utter deadlock. Moreover, the intelligentsia open to Western ideas of scientific progress and secularization became highly intolerant and critical of the Tsarist autocracy. Even after holding the boldest ideas for socio-political emancipation of their motherland Russian

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intelligentsia became an appendage of the poor segment of society. The young intellectuals realized that the fashionable highbrow attitude of high culture cherished by the Western literary people at the later part of the century is absolutely invalid in Russia which does not permit them even 'marginal independence'. Consequently, they had to make desperate efforts to contact common people; rustic peasants and 'proletarians only yesterday peasants. In this socio-political context though Dostoevsky shared the romantic vision about his country peasants with Tolstoy, his literary works do not portray manorial life. His literature is a depiction of city life exposing the socio-political and philosophical ideologies held by the contemporary society.

Alike Dostoevsky, the depiction of urban life with its materialistic culture is one of the crucial themes of Bellow's works. The settings of his major novels, *The Dangling Man*, *The Victim*, *The Adventures of Augie March*, *Seize the Day*, *More Die of Heartbreak* and *Mr. Sammler's Planet* are mostly inclusive of two American mega cities, New York and Chicago. His city life-oriented novels charged with his eclectic reading in diverse ways mirror the intellectual waves of his time, fragmentation and dehumanization of the society, cultural history of western civilization and contemporary American history. In Hyland's words:

With few exceptions, his fictions take place at the historical moment at which they were written, and taken as a body his work reflects the flux of ideas and the major political and cultural tensions that have affected the western world in the decade since World War II (Bellow's America is metonymic of the west, representing in effect, the modern world) .... one of the great strengths of his prose is his ability to suggest the texture of urban experience [ 8].

Bellow's fiction is infused with the American traditional culture which has a broad and diverse approach to life. To the naturalistic writers like Dreiser who preceded Bellow in writing about Chicago the historical pressure and air was deterministic as it shaped human identity. But in case of Bellow, his protagonists even after being influenced by the traditional and contemporary psycho-social norms, political, philosophical ideas and ideologies and historical experience are not lost. Bellow's protagonists resist becoming a slave of this determinism under the sun. To be independent of these surrounding forces they have to be able to understand it and through this learning process they acquire life experience. Only by understanding history, filtering the good ideas and theories from the bad it is possible for them to make the right choice of

their position in their own time. As Kenneth Trachtenberg puts it in the opening chapter of *More Die of Heartbreak*:

Unless your thinking is deduced from a current conception of history, unless you live in your time, thinking will only confuse you- it will drive you nuts. The terrible result of hyperactive but unfocused consciousness is a cause of our decline. [11]

It is to be mentioned that the novelists, Faulkner and Hemingway previous to Bellow have mingled American traditional experience with profundity in their works but Bellow protagonists represent a new generation whose voice is an immigrant voice, which cries out the dislocated and alienated despair and which struggles for an American identity. It is very obvious for Bellow to perceive the frustration of his generation since Bellow was born of immigrant Russian Jewish parents. Saul Bellow was born in Canada but his parents having only immigrated from St. Petersburg, Russia in 1913 to Canada were more Russian than Canadian. Bellow spent his childhood in Montreal slums where they had to suffer and struggle for living. In Bellow's own words as cited in Hyland:

"The Jewish slums of Montreal during my childhood, just after the First World War, were not too far removed from the ghettos of Poland and Russia. Life in such places of exile and suffering was anything but ordinary." [8]

His cityscape is also enriched by his orthodox Jewish religious learning and the style of Yiddish vernacular. His fiction integrates the slum life and the high culture or academic atmosphere in a single whole. The urban society with its corrupted materialism appears to be grotesquely comical and harrowingly tragic. Each of his novels has autobiographical elements and almost all his protagonists are dwellers of urban modern society.

Dostoevsky in delineating the predicament of the individuals in nineteenth century Russia as children of urban misery, despair, boredom materialism put them in urban setting and we get an almost similar picture in the fiction of the Post world war Jewish-American writer Bellow's works, though in a different national and social context.

In Leroux's famous essay, "Exhausting Ennui: Bellow, Dostoevsky and literature of Boredom", he puts forth how Bellow is influenced by the Russian author Dostoevsky against the gloomy mood of the materialistic urban world:

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Bellow's narrative of a 'cold winter' spent in a Paris prostrated 'under a perpetual fog' suggests his agreement with the 'prejudices' of the 'great radical' on this score if not on others (1994, 41, 39). In his *Winter Notes*, it will be remembered, Dostoevsky begins by tracing the origins of Russian 'idleness' and 'boredom' back to 'the ways in which Europe has been reflected in us at various times and has imposed its civilization upon us' (1988, 10, 15). He then goes on to indict the modern, French counterpart of that civilization for its boredom-inducing individualism and materialism. 'Depressed and sunk in spirit', Bellow too finds Paris, with the 'pervasiveness of [ its] literary culture' (Balzac, Stendhal, Zola, Streignberg, Camus, and Sartre all are mentioned in support), unusually given to 'melancholy and bad temper' [7].

To illustrate I am focusing on similar pictures from Dostoevsky and Bellow's works respectively. In Dostoevsky's *Notes from the Underground* (1964) we come across with an extreme picture of urban black mood, monotony and despair. The underground man's cellar, Petersburg city itself, wet snow or the description of Crystal Palace are all symbolic of urban monotony. The setting of the novel and its ingrained elements speak of urban ennui, sloth and depression.

We observe almost a similar picture in Bellow's short novel, *The Dangling Man*. Here, Bellow protagonist, Joseph, a young Chicagoan is a journal keeper, an intellectual and a writer, quitted his job at the Inter-American Travel Bureau and waiting for induction in the army as the draft call may come any day. As he is now jobless, he seems to be in a dangling position. He and his wife have shifted to a cheaper house in order to be able to live on his wife's earning. The outside world is a projection of his mind. The urban setting of dreariness is creating a sense of boredom or ennui in his soul. He says in Mr. and Mrs. Almstadt's house: "I could see a long way from this third- floor height. Not far off there were chimneys, their smoke a lighter grey than the grey of the sky; and straight before me, ranges of poor dwellings, warehouses, billboards, culverts, electric signs blankly burning, parked cars and moving cars" [ 9]

If we shift our gaze now to Augie March's Chicago abode which is slum or near slum, we can easily get a picture of a dingy and claustrophobic place. Along with Augie March almost all of Bellow protagonists are inextricably attached to their classic Jewish past. They sometimes have materialistic aspiration like money or fame but they lose life energy in the city and deep down at heart suffer from boredom and lack the competitive force of the trendy city dwellers.

The separation between the lonely individual and the life of the community people is a common theme of bourgeois and modern literature. Dostoevsky's Underground man and Bellow's Joseph, both these anti-heroes and lonely souls in a confessional manner reveal their mental conflict. In this connection I would like to add from Daniel Golden's "Money and Madness: Saul Bellow's *Humbolt's Gift*", as he writes:

Saul Bellow continues to display a striking affinity for the themes and formal strategies of confessional fiction, the genre of such important modern works as Dostoevsky's *Notes from Underground*, Svevo's *Confessions of Zeno*, and Sartre's *Nausea*. Bellow's fiction has long documented his sympathetic insight into the dilemma of modern men, forced to suffer the indignities of social anonymity and psychic humiliation. The modern confessional novel provides a generic framework for Bellow's ideas and a fitting platform for his troubled, often obsessed speakers. [ 1]

Dostoevsky's underground man, the nameless narrator lives in a 'dark cellar' as earlier mentioned. Being an ardent lover of literature, he prefers to write and thus intends to be alienated from the society. In his self-created isolation, he views the world on the ground through the cracks in the floorboards. The underground man takes pride in his abode in the underworld. He brags that the underground space is very precious to him as it gives him scope to exert his individualism. Truly he is individualistic when he perceives that the city is very artificial in the sense that it tends to epitomize the abstract ideas of modernism. But his selfish individualism makes him mean, jealous and empty man. Simultaneously if we think of Joseph's seclusion at his writing, we find being a journal keeper he speaks his mind in his journal. To seek his high individuality, he seeks alienation and isolation. In the entries of his journal he is putting down the records of his daily events, flashback of his past life, some interesting dreams, his reflections and his secret talking to his double or his other self, in the novel who is called Tu As Raison Aussi or the Spirit of Alternatives. This other self is a reflection of a modern man's complex nature, a consequence of modern life duplicity and trouble. Joseph uses a confessional style in his journalistic writing as he seeks his higher self and during the course he realizes, this is indifference to his near and dear people. He also realizes isolation from the rest of the community is only vanity on his part. He does not succumb to the deterministic influences of the time and realizes it is

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dignified to be with one of the communities and he embraces the army life.

For the intellectual youth of his country Dostoevsky had love and concern but he had a justified fear that the self-governed intellectuals under the atheistic social utopian or European enlightened ideas prevalent then, alienated from the Russian people and devoid of the controls of the Christian spirituality may succumb to the vice of vanity. Simultaneously if we shift our gaze from Dostoevsky to Bellow, we notice that Bellow has almost the same concern for the youth of the present generation of his country. Bellow is disturbed at heart observing and perceiving the gap and dislocation of the younger generation from the values of the past and tradition. Bellow has apprehension that the young intellectuals of his country being overtaken by the deterministic drives like the philosophy of enlightenment, materialism, scientific inventions, industrialization and modernization may suffer from disillusionment.

When we probe into *Crime and punishment*, we deeply sense Dostoevsky loved young intellectuals of his day, like Rascolnicov who has nobility of mind. Yet he is experimenting with himself under the mechanical, self-eating theory of nihilism, Hegelian theory, self-asserting Napoleonic dream and other utilitarian theories of his days and consequently paving the way to his doom. To compare this state with Bellow's writings I would like to illustrate from Bellow's *Mr. Sammler's Planet*. Here we observe that the septuagenarian Bellow protagonist and mouthpiece Arthur Sammler is a former democratic socialist and a passionate follower of the western Utopian idealistic Enlightenment conception, a supporter of human reason and rationality and a structured benevolent social change. But he even being a victim of the holocaust and against the monstrosity of war at the heat of the moment is revengeful and brutally murders a German prisoner in the Zamosht forest for his bread and his clothes. On reflection, the elderly Sammler realizes that the Western enlightenment conception of fusion of science with morality and its liberal individualism has failed to create human brotherhood and has resulted in the inability to distinguish good from bad and in technological power aspiration. Moreover, the novel is saturated with Mr. Sammler's obsession of young generation distancing themselves from the golden past. In Chapter one, we get to see how when Sammler lectures in a seminar at Columbia University to an youthful audience he is shouted at and humiliated because of the perspective gaps between him and his audience.

Urbanization and modernization of society result in the dislocation of human beings. Due to poverty people immigrate from rural areas in search of work, money, food and shelter. In Dostoevsky's *The Poor People* (1846) we find from the letters of Varvara and Makar a picture of irresistible poverty. Poverty which hovers over people's lives compels them to shift from the quiet of a village to the urban life, full of superficiality and misery. Varvara is a village girl but as her father lost his job she had to move to the poor part of St. Petersburg. Simultaneously when we read *Mr. Sammler's Planet*, we notice how the great historical moment. World War II and its catastrophe compel individuals to immigrate to other countries. Mr. Sammler, an anglophile immigrant and an elderly man in his seventies, a Polish Jew and an aristocrat of the Austro – Hungarian Empire' lived in London before the war and came to America after World War II. He had to undergo a horrific wartime experience. He along with his wife and others arrested by the Nazis were forced to dig a mass grave for themselves. But Sammler is the lone survivor who survived massacre. After the war Mr. Sammler and his daughter Shula were found by Sammler's nephew Elya Gruner from a displaced Persons' (DP) camp to New York and are living in New York during the course of the novel as Elya Gruner is providing for them. The novel, is the experience of an immigrant who is concerned for not only the Jews, but for Americans, Europeans and all of us, the inhabitants of the earth also who undergo the horror of war.

Modern world uproots love, tender feelings from a father's breast for his son. Here, selfish interest becomes the ultimate goal of a father where the sense of responsibility is absent, answer to the call of conscience is forgotten and denied. In both Dostoevsky and Bellow's works the theme of fatherlessness and homelessness recurs.

Apart from the irresponsible, buffoon and fornicator father Fyodor Karamazov's role in Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazovs*, we get an instance of father's cruelty when we look at stinking Lizaveta's story. Lizaveta, is the mother of Smerdyakov and it is suspected that Smerdyakov is the illegitimate son of Fyodor Karamazov. "This Lizaveta was a dwarfish creature", an idiot who died while giving birth to Smerdyakov. "She wandered about summer and winter alike, barefooted, wearing nothing but a hampen smok." [2]. Her father Ilya, a homeless and a sickly drunkard lost everything and was a workman for a long time with well- to- do tradespeople. Whenever Lizaveta came to him the spiteful and sickly father started beating her immediately. So she

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had to walk through the town and looked after by the charity of the town's people.

The heartlessness is acutely felt in Bellow's *Seize The Day* or in *The Adventures of Augie March*. Tommy Wilhelm, the hero of *Seize The Day*, is an unsuccessful grown up man with an estranged wife, is in need of financial help and love of his father. His father, aged, rich, successful Dr. Adler is physically present but emotionally distant. He is selfish, proud, wants filial worship but unwilling to help his son financially and practically. The theme of fatherlessness and homelessness is more prominently echoed in *The Adventures of Augie March*. The family in which Augie was born is a problematic family. His father has deserted his mother before the narration of the novel started. Augie's taking so many occupations lets him experience American life at many social levels. He works in a departmental store, he steals and sells books, he becomes an eagle trainer to hunt iguanas, etc. His childhood, his picking up so many occupations reflect his lack of rootedness and the absence of his father. In his character Bellow is redefining America whose great tradition is reinforced by its immigrant nature.

Modern metropolis has its macabre world. In both the authors' works crime, corruption, murder drunken people, cops, prison, underhand alliances and immoral sexuality frequent.

In Dostoevsky's *The Idiot* we observe how Nastasya Philipovna, a woman with golden heart and an orphan has been made into a social upper-class mistress by an aristocrat like Trotsky. This person has destroyed the orphan's adolescent years, her innocence and used her purity and womanhood. In this novel we find Rogozin, a twenty-seven-year-old, a descendant from a long time of merchants, and a profligate son whose passionate love for Nastasya Philipovna is characterized by jealousy and violence. He beats her once and eventually stabs her to death. Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* is about murder, the murderer Raskolnikov, the detective, Porfiry, prostitute Sonya and the Siberian prison.

In Bellow's works let us shed light on Mr. Sammler's reflections in *Mr. Sammler's Planet*. The book reads: "He thought often what a tremendous appeal crime had made to the children of bourgeois civilization. Whether as revolutionists, as superman, as saints, Knights of faith, even the best teased and tested themselves with thoughts of knife and gun. Lawless. Raskolnikovs" (Bellow, 1988). It is revealed here how Dostoevsky's intellectual murderer Raskolnikov influences Bellow's thought and consequently his Mouthpiece Mr. Sammler. Mr.

Sammler is a holocaust survivor who has seen enough monstrosities of life. He hates the weird world around him full of hippies, crime, violence, eccentricity of his relatives. To say more specifically, the novel is structured around a psycho-sexual format. The 'phallic exhibitionism' of the pickpocket to Mr. Sammler though symbolic of the validity and potency of American and European masculinity at the same time speaks of crime and moral degeneration plaguing the western world. Sammler's nephew Dr. Gruner, though now a saintly millionaire, on whose benevolence Mr. Sammler and his daughter Shula is living did illegal abortions and sided with the rich. Elya's son Wallace to make dirty money quickly mixes up with Mafia type people from Las Vegas. It is comprehended that even an overt reading of the novels of the two writers shows how the novels are obsessed with the crime and punishment motifs.

Dostoevsky exposes that material aspiration at its pinnacle may create political chaos. During the later days he had an aversion for the atheistic ideas of the intellectuals whereas in his youthful days he was inflamed with social utopian ideas. And accordingly, the contemporary ideological concepts have been voiced by Dostoevsky's many characters. Yet, his religious temperamental inclination prevailed over intellectual diversity. In *A Raw Youth* as Arcady being frustrated of his mysterious birth became over ambitious and as he was desperately trying to make money, he got involved with socialist conspirators. In this line, next comes Dostoevsky's *The Possessed* which is an extremely political book and sets an example of how political aspirations can turn into violence. In this novel Dostoevsky depicts a revolutionary group that intends to overthrow those who are currently in power. It is a clandestine group of high intelligence and they are the conspirators capable of committing horrific crime without remorse. The setting of the novel is a provincial town outside Petersburg. But the story is narrated by Mr. Govorov, and though Mr. Govorov did not partake in every conversation but from his and Trofimovitch's recollection of Petersburg days we are indirectly connected to the Petersburg milieu.

The social and political upheavals which disturb the serenity of civil life is also critically dealt by Bellow. In mega cities like New York and Chicago we observe different types of socio-political movement. They may originate from racism or cultural depravity. Sammler's racist attitude towards the Indian scholar Dr. Lal speaks of the novel's political bias. Sammler also recognizes that the capacity of science may be manipulated for the destruction of human civilization as a consequence

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of political power play. During Sammler's report coverage of a six day war for a Polish newspaper his realization about science's destructive power over mankind is reinforced. In his reflection on the six day war which started on the 5<sup>th</sup> June, 1967 and known as the third Arab- Israeli war he mourns for the "charred and Stinking" bodies of the Arabs who were attacked unprepared by the Jewish aircrafts of advanced technology. These Israeli planes came down and dropped their napalm bombs and burnt the Arab land and Muslims and later denied using Napalm bombs. History has observed that Israelis have grudge against muslims because during the middle age except some like Caliph Omar, under most of the muslim ruler's reign they suffered discrimination, marginalization and sometimes were forced to convert to Islam though the muslim rulers claimed to be just to the Jews. Because of these adversaries inflicted upon them and in the name of fighting for their existence if they take vengeance against the Arabs, then I should say as conscientious human beings we cannot become killers of other unprepared and innocent human beings, we cannot violate human rights. Taking revenge is no solution, it is only self-degrading. Looking at the muslim corpses in holes Sammler ponders, they are doing the same thing which Nazis by mass extermination did to them. Sammler meditates and finds himself guilty as he encounters his animal instinct that even after suffering in Nazis hands, the horrific incident that he was supposed to be killed; getting chance he did the same thing when he killed pitilessly the unarmed German soldier.

Money and lack of money or poverty play a dominating role in the works of both Dostoevsky and Bellow's works. In the living hells like Petersburg slums people like Raskolnikov forgets morality. The depraved, macabre world around, compels a noble heart like Rascolnicov to commit murder. In this world hunger becomes the only truth, people are ever striving with heart rending, assaulting poverty and on the face of that spirituality, teaching and preaching of religion become meaningless and farcical. Raskolnokov is no more touched by the Christian ethos that one should love all and forgive the social vermin like the old pawnbroker, Alyona Ivanova. He forms his own moral standard, influenced by different philosophical theories, like the theory of extraordinary man with Napoleonic dreams, or the political ideologies like Godless golden social utopia commits murder and justifies it. Along with Dostoevsky Bellow's protagonists are also city dwellers. They are also victims of cruelty, aimlessness and despair of urban life. Though influenced by their Jewish past and heritage they are struggling to find

their identity and hold on to it yet his protagonists are victims of cultural displacement and as modern men many of them are attracted to materialistic lures. Despite their Jewish spiritual background, their strong desire for social and financial uplift of which Augie March is a quintessential example reminds us that their root is embedded in European experience and aspiration.

Though money is a necessary means for living but its role in creating social corruption is predominant in the oeuvres of Dostoevsky and Bellow.

Misuse of the power of money may have dehumanizing effects on society and its people. As we see Dostoevsky's anti-hero the underground man suffers from an inferiority complex. To hide his inferiority, he assumes superiority whenever he is capable of doing so. He wants to control others through money either by giving it or withholding it. We see how he insults the prostitute, Liza by imposing money on her only to assert that she means nothing to him as a human being other than her professional value, prostitution. When he realizes he is morally a weak person and inferior to Liza's innate goodness he is shattered.

If not a similar picture but almost an inverted similar picture of the abuse of money power is observed in Bellow's *Henderson the Rain King*. The wealthy Henderson has all the material comforts and fulfillments that Tommy Wilhelm aspired but never achieved. Henderson on the contrary is suffocated by the abundance of wealth. Amidst his wealthy surrounding he is chased by a sense of his uselessness and accordingly suffers an inferiority complex. Henderson's ancestors were nation builders but they used dishonest and manipulative ways to gain success. From this recognition perhaps, his inferiority complex originates and consequently he wants to taunt and trample down all the evidence of material success in his life. He attended an Ivy League University and has a Master's degree yet he outwardly puts an effort to pass for a crude person. His frustration is marked by his improper treatment of his family most specifically of his second wife Lily to whom outwardly and in front of the society he does not show propriety and the required respect. We get a picture of Henderson's married life as the text *Henderson the Rain King (1996)* reads:

My Second wife is called Lily.... And I raved at her in public and swore at her in private [10].

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Later he explains his odd behavior and says that he treated Lily like a stranger before the guests because he did not want Lily to look like as if she is the lady of the house.

Madness and false appearance or masquerade are other dark psychological inner conflicts which ensue from attraction for materialistic lures and aspirations. Herein Dostoevsky once more influences Bellow.

To go back to Dostoevsky, "Dostoevsky is often cited, ... by critics and biographers as the arch instance of creative neurosis" [4]. Madness or psychological disorder has been operated by Dostoevsky in variegated ways in his works. The madness of his characters ensues from their moral and spiritual crises. Many of his characters suffer from no faith or doubt in faith and eventually they lose rational faculty. The madness in his characters is manifested in dream forms, in epileptic fits, in delirium or in abnormal psychological or sexual behaviours.

Netochka Nezvanova in Dostoevsky's unfinished work *Netochka Nezvanova* is a psychologically derailed character. Her abnormal psycho-sexual behavior is manifested in her repeated incestuous attractions. First towards her step father, Efimov, then her foster step sister Katya. Extreme egoism is another aspect of madness which is exhibited in Effimov's character and causes his ruin. He believes himself to be the greatest violinist in Russia and being an artist, he is not supposed to meet family responsibilities. But he is humiliated by everyday life. He is yet pacified by the fact that he is being persecuted. But when he discovers that he is no great talent he is devastated. Epilepsy is another manifestation of mental disturbance. Like Dostoevsky himself, Prince Myshkin suffers from epilepsy.

Bellow has exposed madness and false appearances posed by the people of contemporary society in his works as well. Malin points out three components of madness in Bellow's oeuvre. He says "The Key components are narcissism, abstraction and compulsion" [6]. Irving Malin states that we are always struggling with ourselves to fight false greatness, 'moha'. With Irving in the same tone, I would like to say that we assume greatness which we lack. From this impotency Narcissism arises. To elevate ourselves we demean others. We want others to dance to our tune so we may exert power which we do not possess. In this context, we may turn to a scene in *Dangling Man* and we notice Mr. Frink, very much conscious of his power feels threatened. He treats Joseph like an object of abstraction. As a weak human being he wants to use others as toys of his machination. Thus, he degrades himself from a

weak personality to one weaker. The weaker he grows, the stronger his wish becomes to flail power over others thus compulsion enters. Whatever he does then becomes childish, absurd and clownish.

Bufoonery has been implemented by Dostoevsky where the characters are full of pretensions. The father Fyodor Karamazov in *The Brothers Karamazovs* is out and out a buffoon. In *the Possessed* the most mysterious devilish character, a dark prince Stavrogin is called Ivan Tsarevitch. It is assumed that he the false Czar will reign when the nihilists will be in power.

Bellow's works also sharply point out the contemporary society's false appearance or masquerade. We find real life instructors like Dr. Tamkin in *Seize the Day* or grandma Lauch in *The Adventures of Augie March*.

Below is critical of American University scholars just as we observe that Dostoevsky is also critical of Ivan's intellectual pride in *The Brothers Karamazov*. It is interesting to note that Bellow being himself a University professor is sometimes critical of University intellectuals. He implies that the growing interest of American Universities in technical scientific knowledge is one of the causes for dehumanization of society and culture. Sometimes, the universities are not mindful enough about their existent art, culture and the literature streams of the education system. In *Seize the Day*, Tommy is in the teasing mood about his cousin Artie, who has little sense about manners but now a university teacher. Here Bellow, points out that the American academic literary situation is not satisfactory because teachers like Artie are taking possession of the American literary field these days.

### **Conclusion**

As we compare and contrast the oeuvres of the two writers, Dostoevsky being the predecessor influences Bellow in many respects. Both of them realize the impact of urban misery, the moral degeneration, the impact of the materialistic lure on the individual. With the urban intellectuals Dostoevsky is not satisfied. We hear almost the same tone in Bellow's criticism of the University professionals. Materialistic greed becomes so acute that the whole society pollutes. Madness and crime become its inherent part. But in case of politics or social development neither Dostoevsky nor Bellow supports violence or revolution. Both of them are looking forward to individual's spiritual awakening as a social being tied in love of brotherhood. In this respect also, Dostoevsky with his prophetic vision is the precursor to Bellow.

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