

# “Disintegration and Fragmentation of Modern man and Deterioration of spiritual and moral values”

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## **Abstract**

The present paper focuses on the theme of disintegration and fragmentation of modern man because of man's indescribable suffering and a sense of isolation and separation. Bernard Malamud has effectively and artistically brings out how the Jews were slaughtered during the Second World War by Hitler. The novels also focus on deterioration of moral, ethical and spiritual values and growing materialism of Americans. These novels focus on racial discrimination and the problem of apartheid and how the Jews were insulted, humiliated and tortured by Hitler and his followers in the name of religion. The novelist is very hopeful, positive and optimistic that transformation and a kind of metamorphosis might occur in the future. The characters created by him are very positive, confident and hopeful that there might be some reformation in the years to come. The socio-political and even educational factors also contribute significantly and all his novels and with an optimistic note.

(Keywords: Disintegration, Fragmentation, Transformation, Deterioration, Suffering, Materialism, Degeneration, Male-female and family relations, Alienation, Humanism, Modern Man's dilemma, Protagonist, Isolation, Identity crisis, uncertainty and insecurity)

## **Introduction**

The paper throws light on the various issues and themes raised by Malamud in his novels and significance of his novels in the contemporary scenario. Bernard Malamud's novels deal with diverse themes and issues drawn from different socio-economic background and context. The paper focuses on the representative novels which deal with diverse themes. The novels clearly justify the fact that the whole mankind is connected to each other and

they are inter-related and interdependent and one cannot stay secluded from the others as one's suffering is bound to affect others.

## Massacre of Jews

The novels that I have chosen for this paper are *The Assistant*, *The Tenants*, *The Fixer*, *Dubin's Lives*, *A New Life*.

During the Second World War, countless Jews were slaughtered in the name of religion under the rule of Hitler. It is made absolutely clear in the novels that America has been progressing and immense growth of economy and materialism; but there is degeneration of ethical, moral and spiritual values which ultimately lead to anarchy and disorder. Uncertainty and insecurity of modern existence.

B.M. Shalla discusses the distressed situation of the American individual in the post World War II period in his work 20<sup>th</sup> century American novel. He believes that there is a sense of severe self consciousness and a sense of fear as a result of "uncertainty, insecurity and indignity of modern existence".

Alienation and isolation of modern man are of the important themes and issues which are most discussed in American literature in alienation. Bernard Malamud and other Jewish writers focus on the themes of suffering and alienation. Bernard Malamud has effectively and artistically brought out the richness of American literature in his novels. The writer brings out the humiliation and sufferings and alienation of the Jews community through the protagonists of the novels.

The common themes which dominate the novels of Malamud and other Jewish writers are male-female and family relations, fast changing and extremely competitive materialistic society, faithlessness are the key issues raises by the writers complete transformation and Malamud metamorphosis of Jews anticipates a society where there is a complete moral revival and develop an idea of a new life based as empathy, love and humanity. Jews who were misplaced from their homeland had to face a tough time humiliation and torture but they never lost their faith, hope, fortune, moral values and traditions.

It is very evident that Malamud could understand the need to present the transformation of his characters.

*The Fixer*, one of the prominent novels of Malamud brings out the story of torment and disgrace into a story of human achievement and victory. It is a touching story set in Tsarist Russia, about a poor lonely individual who experiences insult, humiliation and agony after the Russian Massacre. It is the story of a simple carpenter's unnecessary suffering, insult and humiliation while facing Russian anti-semitism.

## Humanism in the context of growing materialism

Malamud Concentrates on humanity's tender areas by representing the painful story of a middle aged man in one of his prominent stories Dubin's lives, the novel focuses on marriage, infidelity, household, self-torment, blame, order and punishment and love and effort. The two important characters of the novel, Dubin and Kitty are portrayed as multifaceted, rich and extremely true human beings. He expresses his idea of life through his dominant themes of conversion, development death and rebirth. The writer makes it absolutely clear that human beings should be adept to accept life in the context of suffering, humiliation and torture.

A New Life is one of the well-known novels of the writer, which brings out the theme of man's pursuit for legitimacy and recognition in the social and emotional context. The novel brings out the auto biographical element of Malamud's twelve years of teaching at the Oregon State University.

## Modern man's dilemma

A fine description of modern man's dilemma has been effectively depicted in the Assistant. It is the story of a deprived Jewish grocer Morris Bober and his gentle assistant Frank Alpine. The story focuses the protagonist Frank's ceaseless search through the cluster of monotonous life. The protagonist of the novel challenges himself and a serious self-appraisal helps him in discovering his identity.

The relationship between the two writers-The Jewish writer, Harry Lesser and the Black writer Willie Spearmit is effectively presented in the novel the Teants. He bitterly criticizes and opposes social and political problems in the modern era, which is the multifaceted and provocative issue of racial resentment.

The Fixer is one of the prominent novels of Bernard Malamud. The novel focuses on a Jewish handyman Yakov Bok. He is arrested on suspicious of murder, when a Christmas boy is killed. When interrogated, he admits that he is a political, doesn't belong to any political ideology. He makes it very clear that although he is Jewish, he is not a religious man. He contemplates about human misery, suffering and sad predicament of modern man. Though Bok asserts that he is not a highly political man or religious man. The police refused to believe his words because he is a Jewish. Bok spends months in prison without any formal charge sheet and strong evidences to prove that he is guilty. His friends sincerely try to convince and persuade the authorities to set him out of the jail. Instead of releasing Bok, the police arrested his friends, harassed and threatened by the Russian government. The whole episode clearly drives home the fact that the Jews insulted, humiliated and tortured by the Russian government. The Novel ends two years after Bok is sent to prison. The Russian government gives him an opportunity to hire a lawyer and he was made a scape goat.

Bernard Malamud has effectively projected how the Russian bureaucracy violated human rights and the Jews were insulted and tortured though Bok is a political (does not belong to any political ideology).

A New Life is seemingly the least Jewish of Malamud's books, in which the word Jew is only mentioned once. The protagonist of the novel Seymour Levin, is clearly a Jew. He appeared bearded, fatigued and lonely. He was a stranger in a strange land an outsider in a state called Cascadian, akeoregon. This novel is significant departure from the traditional novels of Malamud. Critics describe it as "most traditional and least mythic work of fiction. It is very significant that this novel is the most autobiographical of all Malamud's fiction. Levin teaches at Cascadia college, a science and technology college, where he was teaching English literature. It is very evident that he became a Teacher by accident, he had only high school teaching experience. Title of the novel rightly suggests that "rebirth, regeneration, physical and psychological relocation". It is very much a campus novel. He says "Teaching people how to write, who do not know what to write".

The Assistant is one of the important novels of Bernard Malamud. It is the story of an immigrant grocer, Morris Bober who lives by Brooklyn, New York. The Protagonist of the novel Bober emigrated from Russia. He met and married Ida in New York. It is very significant to note that mishap has fallen on hard times and had to suffer a great set back because a new store was opened and it attracted the customers. Bober had to rely upon the earnings of their daughter Helen, who was working as a secretary. The novel deals with the disintegration and deterioration of family ties and growing materialism of the characters who transgress all the cannons of moral, ethical and social values.

## Conclusion

The paper focuses on diverse themes presented in the novels of Malamud. He also brings out the degeneration and deterioration of social, ethical, moral and spiritual values in America and a sustained craving for materialism.

Malamud's novels are relevant and appropriate in the present context of globalization as they throw light on growing violence cruelty and materialism and a sense of isolation, identity crisis and disintegration of all the finer and nobler values of life.

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