

## Journey from isolation to affirmation in Dangling Man by Saul Bellow

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### Abstract: -

*Joseph the protagonist wants to be a perfect human being. He is engaged in quest for freedom by questioning his own identity and purpose of life. Joseph is a man of plans and ideas but he is caught in a humiliating and dehumanizing situation. He becomes introspective and speculative during his dangling state. He analyses his life situations from more than a single point of view.*

**Key Words:** -Dangling situation, monologue, inertia.

Bellow's first novel "Dangling Man" is an existential novel. It is in the manner of the absurdist diary literature of existential writers, from Dostoevsky to Camus. It is in the form of a journal. It records the day to day incidents in the life of the narrator, protagonist Joseph. The entries in the novel focus on the sequence of incidents, meditations and moods of Joseph. Joseph, the protagonist of "Dangling Man" is an intelligent monologist. He is a Chicago intellectual. He is contemplative and introspective; of course his contemplation is far away from tranquil. The question which recurs in the introspective phase focuses on the themes of the novel.

### Quest for freedom: -

Joseph, the protagonist is twenty seven year old American of Canadian birth. He is in the service of the Inter American Travel Bureau. He leaves his job since he receives an induction notice from the army in 1942. As he is called, he submits himself for physical test. But before joining the World War II, certain questions are raised about him. He lives in America but he is Canadian Jew. His Jewish Canadian citizenship becomes as obstacle for his induction in the army. He is classified, reclassified and finally accepted but not drafted. Joseph therefore is in a state of uncertainty for almost a full year. This is dangling state and he is branded to be facts that strange from others. During this one year, he dangles and experiences an existence marked by worklessness, bitter personal relationship and thoughtless leisure.

Joseph writes the diary during his dangling state. His writing the diary is a means to clarify his

thoughts and reformulate his values. He has realized that he is different from other beings firstly Jew and secondly being born a Canadian in this American society. His joblessness leads him to frustration and he begins to realize that he is deteriorating an account of his estrangement from the society armed around rages.

Bellow has used the 'dangling' metaphor to describe Joseph's condition of emotional insecurity and painful sensitivity to the changing circumstances of his life. He dangles away from a purposeful life into an inactive existence. In past he considered intellectual but now he feels absolutely dull and chaotic. Joseph loses his peace of mind since he does not have any engagements. He separates himself from the external world. He depends completely upon what goes on in his mind. This casting off of relationship forces him to turn inward until he can talk to himself from the world. He invents an alter ego which he calls the 'Spirit of Alternatives'.

Joseph is engaged in a quest for freedom by questioning his own identity and purpose of life. The craze for greatness is manifested in a mad pursuit of excellence. Joseph's frustration can never allow him to become great in anything. There is basic urge in him for pure freedom. Joseph is the victim of himself rather than his age. The problem is he sees the things as he wishes to see them. He is the victim of his striving rather than his despair. A progression in Joseph's outlook towards freedom is obvious.

The crucial revelation of the essential meaning of freedom is at the centre of the novel. Bellow rejects Joseph's former erroneous view that lack of social ties or responsibility is freedom. Bellow corrects our basic understanding of the very

essence of freedom. During his dangling period Joseph loses his place among men. He accepts the truth that his existence and freedom can only be authentic in relation to other lives and not in a vacuum. This motivates him to return to society.

**Conclusion: -**

The novel moves from inertia to action, from loss of faith to new faith. It is Joseph's journey from isolation to affirmation. He understands this accountability in life and decides to join the army. His joining the army fulfills the thematic requirements of the novel. In joining the army he accepts his limitations and society.

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