



## THE CONFLICT BETWEEN SCIENCE AND CONSCIENCE IN SAUL BELLOW'S THE HUMBOLDT'S GIFT

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This paper aims at highlighting the human values in the dehumanized society through the work of the eminent novelist Saul Bellow. What Science provided is insufficient to the soul. The Man in the ultra modern world has insatiable desire for material wealth and forgets to be a human. This is what really a causative to the perils he encounters. Love and proper understanding of the existence are some of the means to meaningful life.

Saul bellow is the preeminent American novelist of the second half of the twentieth century. He is the winner of three national book awards for fiction and recipient of Nobel Prize for literature .He witnessed two world wars and weathered the depression. His vast experience fabricated the texture of his novels. Scientific advances, which improved the life style, yet turned man into dehumanised automatons. The conflict between science and conscience, heart and head constitute the very essence of the novel The Humboldt's Gift.

Bellow, in his novel Humboldt's Gift portrays the trauma of two literary artists-Von Humboldt Fleisher and Charles Citrine. Both have been the victims of dehumanized world, which seems to run through money and power leading man to live in a world of false values. While trying to establish a balance between art and power to elevate "the human enterprise, so grand infinitely varied"(HG,p.29),Humboldt failed his enterprise and died a terrible death in disgrace. Poets are of no use in technological America. Not the poet but technology that replaced poet now serves the mankind. What led Humboldt to failure is his failure to integrate his poetic visions with his ideas and his ideas with the actual ways of living. He did not know how to match the schemes of making money with art.His failure in financial terms gnawed him., Bellow once again vindicates that love of fellow humans is what makes a man humane and imagination must overcome intellect.

In depicting the predicament of Citrine as a product of contemporary conditions bellow once again more forcefully and in clear terms, weighs the human against the non-human. Citrine is put into the world where money and technology threaten to nullify the power of art and imagination altogether. The city is Bellow's favourite city Chicago to which Citrine feels a sense of belonging has become inhuman and torturous. The inner calmness of all sensitive souls are destroyed by the city. Reality has become terrible for Charlie Citrine who is dragged to the court by his wife and stripped off of a last hope of consolation from his second mistress Renata who leaves her mother and child with him to marry her former lover. Citrine represents the loss of inner life and hope of modern man.What Bellow shows through Citrine is that private existence of self is distracted by the destructive rationalism of a technological civilization.

The inevitable results of all this, Citrine is alienated and he feels a sense of displacement. Setting himself against these dehumanised forces, Citrine comes to represent the loss of inner life and hope of modern man. What Bellow shows through Citrine is that the private existence of self is distracted by the destructive rationalism of a technological civilization. Putting Citrine against these forces and by charting out the path for spiritual survival in a post modern society, it is Bellow's purpose to show the possibility of moral transformation, which enables one to come to terms with life and reality. The underworld prince Cantabile comes to represent the urban ugliness that threatens to crush the finer and beautiful elements of human life.

By its enchanting power, money has trespassed into the intellectual world. Cantabile wants to purchase talent with money. His wife teaches at Radcliffe and has been working for her Ph.D. on none other than Von Humboldt Fleisher. He demands help and data from Citrine in order to complete her project. In the long scene depicting the conversation between Citrine and Cantabile, Bellow lays bar – the present condition of artist intellectuals in money ruled America where art has becomes a commodity on sale. Hinting at a kind of love-hate relationship between Citrine and Cantabile, Bellow presents a culturally degenerated civilization where even the underworld monster longs for a higher life:

Money has become an all pervading force in an urban industrialized society, which not merely attempts to corrupt the individual self, but at its annihilation altogether. "Ten grand to-day will get you fifteen by Thursday. That's fifteen percent in three days. Fifteen percent" (p. 265) as Cantabile reveals America thus has been a harsh trial to the human spirit. Citrine is aware of the mearge modern existence, of identity by conditioning forces of society.

Gertrude Stein used to distinguish between a person who is an entity and one who has an 'identity'. A significant man is an entity. Identity is what they give you socially. Your little dog recognizes you and therefore you have an identity. An entity, by contrast, an impersonal power, was be a frightening thing. (p. 311).



By possessing his mere identity, the individual self has become a dwarf in the face of a giant society. Man has lost the power of true soul under the terrible attack of conditioning forces: “the great feelings and thoughts are gone” (p. 294). As a result, man has lost his inner strength and beauty.

Citrine reveals in clear terms that without restoration of order and values, salvation of mankind is not possible. For this one can depend on the power of imagination that directly springs from human soul. More scientific formulations cannot explain complex human nature. It cannot reach the human heart. It cannot teach man in the art of love leading to universal brotherhood. It is important before the basic human qualities like love, sympathy, kindness brotherhood. Science is unable to teach man to behave as human. In the world where money has pushed the art back to the pit and dollar have come to soul's husband. To live a meaningful life in age like this one must learn to understand life. For this Citrine seems to hint one must look inward and delve deep. The illumination that teaches a man to behave as a true human being must come from within. For this, however a man must have his striving. He must retain his faith in such a power and stick to his striving amid the distracting forces of a technological world.

It becomes evident that Bellow demonstrates the possibility of the survival of self and art in modern industrialized America against the distractions created by modern machine civilisation. Bellow always advocates possibilities of meaningful private existence by which one can still have a decent approach to life.

#### **Reference**

1. Bellow, Saul, Humboldt's Penguin Books, 2008.
2. Herbert J. Muller, Modern Fiction: A Study of Values. 1937.
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