



## **The Theme of Existing in the Present in Saul Bellow's *Seize The Day***

T. Devaraj<sup>a</sup>, Dr. G. Manivannan<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Assistant Professor of English & Research Scholar, Rajah Serfoji Government College (Autonomous), Thanjavur-613005 Tamil Nadu. (Affiliated to Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirappalli - 620 024).

<sup>b</sup> Research Advisor & Assistant Professor of English, Rajah Serfoji Government College (Autonomous), Thanjavur-613005 Tamil Nadu. (Affiliated to Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirappalli - 620 024).

### **APA Citation:**

Devaraj, T., & Manivannan, G. (2021). The Theme of Existing in the Present in Saul Bellow's *Seize The Day*. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 17(4), 2843-2844.

Submission Date: 08/10/2021

Acceptance Date: 22/12/2021

### **Abstract**

Contemporary materialistic society has diminished the human being into a mere commodity. The world of business and technology has led human thoughts and feelings to the scientific rationalism. A common man's relationship with his family, friends, and acquaintances is crippled. He does not live his life but merely exists in this world. This paper aims at analysing how the modern man is not living but existing with the seizures of the modern-day life in Saul Bellow's *Seize the Day*.

*Keywords: Materialistic, Family, Friends.*

## **1. Introduction**

In the present world, our society has become so materialistic that it has lost the core human values. The world of business and technology has led human thoughts and feelings to the scientific rationalism. A common man's relationship with his family, friends, and acquaintances has lost the 'liveliness'. Relationships have become 'partnerships' as in business. The human being is reduced into a mere commodity. Man does not live his life but merely exists in this world. This paper analyses that kind of existence with the seizures of the modern-day life in Saul Bellow's *Seize the Day*.

Saul Bellow's *Seize the Day* narrates happenings of one day in the life of Wilhelm Adler, a man in his mid-forties who wanted to become a film star in Hollywood. But as his film test was unsuccessful, he had to undertake menial jobs for running his life. His marriage too was unhappy as his wife drained his money constantly. He was also separated from his wife Margaret and his sons, whom he loved very much. He was disappointed with the members of his family; he adopted the role of a hypocrite to conceal his real self. At the age of forty-three, he was exhausted and broken. Rejected by his father, ill-treated by his wife, he was also victimised by a trickster. All these made Wilhelm feel that he was living in a world of Machiavellians. He was isolated and realised that he was living in a society in which God of Wealth was all in all.

He lived briefly in the hotel Gloriana on Manhattan's West Side, where a vast population of older men and women had established geriatric hegemony. Most notable among the elderly residents of the Gloriana were Dr. Adler, Wilhelm's father, and Dr. Tamkin, a dubiously credentialed psychiatrist who dabbled in the stock market. His father, a retired physician in his 80's was a self-centred, uncompassionate old man; Wilhelm sought the protection of his father in the form of financial help and

emotional support. But Wilhelm's appeals were always futile as Dr. Adler was adamant and his responses were always cold, and angry.

William needs not only money, but also interaction with a deep understanding of the heart. Though he repeatedly appealed to his father for compassion, he failed to evoke any kind of sympathy from him. Later, he turned to Dr. Tamkin for help. In spite of his flaws, Dr. Tamkin was a surrogate father to Wilhelm. "At least Tamkin sympathises with me and tries to give me a hand, whereas Dad doesn't want to be disturbed." (35).

He falls prey to Dr. Tamkin's sinister motives and shrewdness. As a result, he undergoes a phase of deep suffering. He is tortured both mentally and morally. He is haunted by the need for money, for his bare sustenance. He thinks: "There is money everywhere...But oh, if I could only work out a little steady income from this." (13) Tamkin tells him that "money-making" is a murderous social activity.

Tamkin made William realise certain truths about human life. Though he does not have strict moral values, he prepares Wilhelm for his spiritual regeneration. It is a paradoxical situation that a degraded man Tamkin teaches him the difference between the true soul and false soul. Wilhelm's father, Dr. Adler, exemplifies the power of money in the modern world. Here is a mental gap between the father and the son. Money has been a vital factor in making Dr. Adler a heartless fellow; Wilhelm feels that the authority his father exercises on the son has been rendered to him by money.

While suggesting the superficialities of the urban system, Dr. Adler symbolizes the power of money in modern city existence. It is an environment where the human relationship is measured in terms of money. Here, the standard of the man is decided on the standard of money he has. Wilhelm's tortured soul craves to be out of this materialistic city life. New York has become money-sucking, crushing, and self-centred city. He repeatedly tells his father it has been unendurable for him to live in New York anymore. Wilhelm feels that he does not belong to New York. He longs for a country life based on simplicity, where not money but human warmth rules life. Bellow here makes one aware of the sheer material pleasure and the exhausting physical experience of life in New York. Wilhelm seeks to live his life on decent terms. But, the rotting New York would not allow him such a possibility. New York appears to him as the end of the world, then that must rest on values. Wilhelm's sense of estrangement arises from his own family, his acquaintances and to some extent, the entire city of New York.

## 2. Conclusion

When looking outside of himself and his small circle, Wilhelm feels alienated from New York City and its inhabitants, in other words, from humanity itself. (Cengage) He recognizes that the estrangement he feels is not exclusive to him alone but to everyone on this earth. The experience of loneliness is part of the human condition. While the title apparently stands for the *carpe diem* concept of 'living in the present' as life is short, Bellow presents the protagonist as merely 'existing in the present' since he is seized by the claws of the day.

## References

Bellow, Saul. *Seize the Day*. Penguin, 2015.

"Seize the Day – Themes" *Novels for Students* Vol. 4. Gale Cengage *eNotes.com*.