

TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY

Kirtipur, Kathmandu

Resolving Conflicting Cultures in Potok's *The Chosen*

A Thesis Submitted to the Central Department of English
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for the Degree of
Master of Arts in English

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2011

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Letter of Recommendation

This is to certify that **Mr. Khagendra Bahadur Karki** has completed his thesis titled "Resolving Conflicting Cultures in Potok's *The Chosen*" under my supervision. I recommend his dissertation for the viva voce.

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Letter of Approval

This thesis titled "Resolving Conflicting Cultures in Potok's The Chosen" is submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, by **Mr. Khagendra Bahadur Karki** been approved by the undersigned members of the Research committee.

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Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude to my thesis supervisor **Dr. Beerendra Pandey**, for his scholarly guidance and correction that he made on the work. He remained patient to activate and energize me from the awkward beginning, which is an appreciable matter for me.

I am greatly indebted to **Dr. Amma Raj Joshi**, Head of the central Department of English, Tribhuvan University and other members of the research committee for granting me an opportunity to carry out this research work. I am greatly obliged to my respected teachers **Mr. Saroj Ghimire** and **Mr. Badri Acharya**, their invaluable suggestions and advices.

I would like to express my great gratitude to my father **Bhupal Man Karki** and mother **Lila devi Karki** who always inspired me for having higher studies. I would like to express my great gratitude to my wife **Mrs. Bigya Basnet (karki)** who made a lot of sacrifice for my research. I would like to express thanks to my sisters **Mrs. Sabitra Dahal** and **Binda Karki** for their inspiration and all around support.

I do not find appropriate and adequate words to offer my genuine salutation to my teachers and friends who have accompanied me, guided me and inspired me in course of my lifetime journey within the realm of words

Abstracts

The Chosen focuses on its two main characters, Danny Saunders and Reuven Malter, and covers their high school and college years, the period in their lives when they struggle for self realization. Both are sons of religious fathers, but while Reuven is orthodox and secularized. Danny's father is the head of an ultraorthodox and mystical sect of Jews called Hasids. Rabbi Isaac Saunders, Danny's father, fully expects Danny to inherit his role as the spiritual leader of his congregation, but Danny is more interested in modern psychology. Reuven's father, David Malter, is a Hebrew scholar. The dissertation has argued that the predicament of Danny Saunders lies at the core of Potok's *The Chosen*: Should Danny remain in the very ethnic world of the ultra-Orthodox Hasidic Jews, or should he reach out to join mainstream American Culture? In this regard Danny's predicament which symbolizes the concern of many Jews in the United States constitutes the conflict in the novel. What the proposed dissertation reveals is that in the Potok's *The Chosen*, the conflict functions at several levels. These are: the generational conflict, cultural conflict, ideological conflict, the split between two vision of God and man's relationship to him. The conflicts are, however, resolved in favor of liberalism and multiculturalism.

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Historical Introduction to *The Chosen*

Chaim Potok's novel, *The Chosen* met overwhelming critical and popular success upon its release in 1967: it was nominated for the National Book Award, the Edward Lewis Wallant Prize for Jewish fiction, and spent thirty-eight weeks on the New York Times best seller list including a stint at the number one spot. This last fact, of course, indicates how diversified the novel's national readership was from the start, despite the fact that the story focused on two Orthodox Jewish families.

Indeed, readers' widespread interest and curiosity about Hasidic Jewish life surprised even the author himself: "I wondered how many Jews would be interested in that tight little world, let alone those who are not Jews, people who haven't the remotest notion of what that world is all about" (Walden 2). Like this, Grebstein believes that a number of things contributed to the novel's unlikely success, including its distinctly American sense of optimism; its nostalgia for the time of World War II; and the novel's focus on positive, mature, ever-evolving relationships between two teenaged boys and their fathers. Clearly, this emphasis on family struck a chord at this time, when the generation gap between conservative parents and Hippie, counterculture adolescents only seemed to yawn wider and wider. As Potok himself noted, "I think I have inadvertently stumbled across a cultural dynamic that I didn't quite see clearly myself until sometime toward the end of the writing *The Chosen*. I think what I am really writing about is culture war" (Walden 4).

Since the seventeenth century, and especially since the nineteenth century, more than 45 million people, representing many ethnic and religious groups, have come to America seeking religious freedom and economic opportunity. Included this large

number of immigrants are Jews. Jews are members of both a religious group and an ethnic group, with ethnic traits and traditions that lie outside their religion. Knowing something about Jewish history can enhance and understanding of *The Chosen*.

Jews first came to America in 1654. At the time of the American Revolutionary War, their number totaled about 2,000. Most earned their living as merchants. Because they had been persecuted as a visible community in Europe, pre-1820 American Jews generally emphasized that they were simply members of a religious faith, not a specific community. Colonial Jews tended to live in major American cities, such as Philadelphia, Charleston, and New York.

Most Jews who came the United States during the colonial period were Sephardim descendent of Spanish Jews. Jews were expelled from Spain in 1492, and Spanish Jews immigrated to Holland and some areas of the America in search of refuge. Although the Jewish population in colonial America was small, Jews embraced their new homeland and accommodated themselves into the majority Christian population. By the early nineteenth century, some Sephardic Jews in America had even converted to Christianity.

Other Jews who arrived in the United States in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries came from central Europe and spread throughout the United States, establishing communities in almost every state. These Jews had suffered persecution in Europe since the First Crusade in the eleventh century and were often forced by government authorities to live in Ghettos.

Even though the civil life of Jews in the German states and in Western Europe had improved by 1820, other factors prompted large numbers of German Jews to immigrate to the United States. These included economic downturns and regular eruptions of anti-Semitism. Moreover, it was almost impossible for Jews to exist as small retailers if the peasant with whom they did business were leaving the rural areas for the cities. Also, Jewish population was increasing heavily the number of Jews tripled opportunities was urgent.

These Central European Jews often became peddlers or opened retail shops. By the middle of the nineteenth century, at a time when the United States economy was rapidly expanding, Jewish businesses had become important to the country's economic development. Throughout the country, Jewish peddlers brought merchandise to less-populated towns and villages that had no retail stores. In the folklore and history of American Jews, peddling is described as the way in which some immigrants gradually moved in retail businesses. The usual retail store was small, although some Jewish immigrants built great department stores.

In Europe, before coming to the United States, these Jews had experienced a relaxation of the Orthodox tenets of their Jewish faith. Consequently, when they got to the United States, they created communities founded on the principle of reforming Judaism to fit a more secular way of life. The pragmatic character of American society and demands of small town frontier life encouraged flexibility, even in religious matters.

Traditional religious practices, including strict adherence to dietary laws and to the rules of the Sabbath (rest day of Jews) and religious holy days, were altered in America. By 1881, the American Jewish population had assimilated into American

culture and adapted their religious observances to a more relaxed American life.

In 1881, Russian Czar Alexander II was assassinated. The Russian government blamed Jews for the assassination and undertook violent physical attacks-called programs-on them. In 1882, the government passed the May Laws, which sharply curtailed Jews' ability to earn a living and participate in Russian society.

Faced with outright hostility and ostracism, many Jews left the Eastern Europe, believing that the United States offered religious tolerance, economic opportunity, and the possibility for starting a new life. Eastern European Jews referred to the United States as the Yiddish for golden land. In spite of physical problems leaving Eastern Europe the difficulty of getting a passport, the high price of a steamship ticket, and the hunger, thirst, and sickness caused by the sea passage itself about two and a half million Eastern European Jews came to the United States between 1881 and 1914.

Almost all Eastern European Jewish immigrants after 1870 stopped in New York City. A great number of them stayed there and found their way to a section of New York called the Lower East Side, a twenty square block area south of Houston Street and east of the bowery. By 1910, about 542,000 Jews lived in this area, and overcrowding became a growing concern. The streets were crowded, but the tiny apartments in which immigrants lived were often worse. One immigrant remembers sharing two rooms with two parents and five other boarders people taken in to help pay the rent.

At this time, the garment industry was experiencing great growth in the United States, with New York City as its center. By 1897, about 60 percent of the New York City Jewish labor force was employed in the apparel industry, By 1910, the city produced 70 percent of nation's women's clothing and 40 percent of its men's clothing, creating

jobs for newly arriving Jews. On the religious front, the majority of Jews who came to United States from Europe between 1881 to 1914 were Orthodox Jews. Orthodox Jews believe that the Torah the basis for the structure of religious law that applies to all areas of a Jews' life.

In addition to the Torah, Orthodox Jews adhere to an oral tradition that they believe was communicated directly from God to Moses, who then transferred it to the religious leadership of the Jewish people. This oral tradition was written down in second century A.D. and is called the Talmud. The Talmud explains and clarifies the frequently controversial laws expressed in the Torah.

For Orthodox Jews, Jewish law applies to all parts of life for example, when and how to pray and which blessings to say at a wide variety of daily activities. But Orthodox Jews had a difficult time fulfilling their religious obligations while living in the United States, an overwhelmingly secular society. Business life was regulated by a Christian calendar, and many Orthodox Jews, wanting to improve their lives economically, encountered conflicts between religious observance and economic necessities that they had resolve in favor of American Demands.

To resolve this religious versus economic conflict, many Orthodox Jews believed that, in order to ensure that their children were not completely secularized, they would have to make some changes in their daily lives. They saw their children, raised in the United States, wandering away from Jewish practice and observance, ashamed of their parents with their foreign accents and clothing, their tastes for European foods and styles of life, and their old-fashioned customs and religion. Moreover, because the parents were uneducated in American ways, their children saw them as members of an ignorant, lower

class ethnic world. This conflict was aggravated by government efforts and social demands on immigrant groups to adjust to American culture.

So, the elder Jews established for their offspring the Young Israel movement, which began on the Lower east Side in 1912 with a mission to help young Jews feel completely American while remaining faithful to Judaism. Young Israel built a microcosm of the larger American society. Through the years, it developed Boy Scout troops, athletic leagues, and sisterhoods, and it established an employment service assist Sabbath observing Jews find employment when discrimination against Jews in employment was legal and wide spread.

The Young Israel movement was one of the foundations of the Modern Orthodox movement in the United States during 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s. Its various positions on such things as spiritual and secular matters are embraced by David Malter and Reuven Malter in Potok's *The Chosen*.

Modern Orthodox Jews believe that they can be committed to time honored Jewish tradition and observances and yet still participate in general American society. For example, they dress like other American while still adhering to Orthodox law. They are committed to Torah Judaism and secular learning, the motto of New York's Yeshivas University, which Modern Orthodox Jews founded. They see their Orthodox position not in terms of narrow Orthodox restriction but in terms of the larger issues of the Jewish and general societies.

Modern Orthodox Jews are traditional in their reliance upon the wisdom of the past and their view of tradition as an anchor, of foundation, in their lives. But because they believe in the benefits to be had from interacting with the modern world, they

remain attached to modern society.

Other Orthodox Jews do not want change their ways of living to assimilate completely into an exclusively American culture. These Jews are represented in *The Chosen* in characters of Danny Saunders and his father, Reb Saunders. They are Hasidic Jews, and their movement is called Hasidism. The word Hasidic, of Hebrew origin, means pious one.

The Hasidic movement dates from the eighteenth century, when a traveling healer and storyteller named Israel ben Eliezer began to preach in the Eastern Europe to the common Jewish people. Preaching a Judaism that relied less on books and more on personal experience, he perceived that Jewish practices of the day, with their overemphasis on fine scholarly issues and complicated ways of studying Jewish texts, were alienating common Jews.

Given the name Ba'al Shem Tov, which means Master of the good name, he began to preach that God accepts prayer not only through scholarship and study but also through piety, love, prayer, and worship full of song and dance. He emphasized the mystical presence of God in everything. It was very important, he said, to be cheerful. Serving God cannot be done in an atmosphere of gloom. A Jew who is conscious of God's closeness is automatically happy.

In addition, the Ba'al Shem Tov decreed that excessive fasting and self-denial are worthless goals. It is far better to enjoy God's blessings and be grateful for them. One should not deny material possessions. "The smoke of my pipe," the Ba'al Shem Tov said, "can be an offering of incense to God." The Ba'al Shem Tov traveled throughout Eastern

Europe, and his reputation spread quickly. Gradually, large numbers of Jews started to depart from their towns to follow him and his disciples. These man followers eventually became the leaders of the Hasidic movement.

Not surprisingly, opposition to the Ba'al Shem Tov's teachings grew. The most important criticism of Hasidic way of life was that it de-emphasized Jewish learning and scholarship. Those who believed that Hasidism was threat to Jewish life and culture were called Mitnagdim. They especially criticized the Hasidic belief in the position of the tzaddik, also called Rebbe, short for rabbi the Ba'al Shem Tov's position within the movement and apparent Hasidic belief that he could issue divine blessing independent of the Torah.

Many non-Hasidic Jews criticize the belief in the position of a tzaddik because they perceive that giving tzaddik such an exalted position comes too close to idol worship, which is condemned in Jewish practice. Jews, they suggest, attempt to draw near to God directly and require no middle person to act as a conveyor of god's word. They concede that a rabbi is someone who knows more about Jewish law and practice than a layperson, but a rabbi is not needed in many instances for example, all that required to hold a prayer service is the presence of ten Jewish males. Indeed, a Jewish saying states: "Nine rabbis do not make a religious service, but ten cobblers do". The central position that the Hasidim give to their tzaddik is not shared but most non-Hasidic Jews.

The Hasidism firmly believe that their manner approaching God is the correct one and that all other ways are wrong. Furthermore, they believe that their won rebbe, or tzaddik is the authority on Jewish religious matters. Each rebbe has distinct ways of

looking at Jewish religious practice, but each sect believes that its own rebbe is absolutely right. Whereas, many Orthodox and non-Orthodox Jews seek to integrate themselves into American society, the Hasidim keep themselves greatly isolated from American culture influence, trying to re-create a more traditional, European-style society they reject any attempts of assimilation into the secular world and faith any form of change within their culture.

Mediation of Conflicting Culture in *The Chosen*

The Chosen, Potok's first novel published in 1967, concerns with the conflicts of living a religious life in a secular society. These conflicts are reflected through the two Jewish communities in the Williamsburg area of Brooklyn, New York. The conflicts in the novel, however functions at several level, the generational conflict, cultural and religious conflict, ideological conflict of characters and other. The conflicts, however, are resolved in favor of multiculturalism and liberalism.

The following lines from the novel justify the conflict within the two different Judaism living religious life in a secular society:

They drank tea from samovars, sipping it slowly through cubes of sugar held between their teeth: they ate the foods of their homeland, talked loudly, occasionally in Russian, most often in a Russian Yiddish, and were fierce in loyalty to Danny's father. (1)

The narrator, Reuven narrates these lines that show the stereotypical life style of Hasidic Jews, the Jews who do not want to be acquainted with the secular Jews or other common people. Reuven is a secular Jew who hates Hasidic at first and alludes the Hasidic showing their strange type of tradition or culture of Hasidism, Hasidic belief, in the line above. This kind of Reuven's bias toward Hasidic life being himself a member of Judaism in America indicates the possible conflict within the Jewish culture. In the novel, Potok introduces us two kind of Judaism. One ultra-Orthodox represented by Reb Saunder, a leader in his community, a tzaddik (his inherited position in his religion), a rigid one who wants to make his son Danny like himself though his son keeps interest in secular study of psychoanalysis of Freud. Another type of Judaism in novel is Orthodox

Jewish represented by David Malter, a secular Jew who writes article in newspaper about the secular issues, who believes in secularism and liberalism. The narrator of this novel is his son Reuven. This is how, within the Judaism there are conflicts regarding many issues like in culture, thought, ideology and so on. In the beginning the conflict is introduced by the game, softball that is played by two parochial schools represented by the different ideology of Reb Saunder and David Malter.

Culturally, Jews are divided between ultra-Orthodox Hasidic Jews and Modern Orthodox Jews. For example, although all male Orthodox children attend yeshiva (Jewish School), some yeshivas (including Reuven Malter's) teach more English subjects than other yeshivas do (including Danny Saunders). Language also separates the different Orthodox Jews: Reuven learns about Jewish subjects in Hebrew; Danny learns here subjects in Yiddish. By mentioning this language difference, Potok introduces the importance that language or in Danny's case, silence plays in the novel.

Danny Saunder and Reuven Malter represents there two Orthodox Jewish sects: Hasidic Jews and Modern Orthodox Jews, respectively. Potok establishes the boys' religious rivalry by having each as the leader of his softball team. Interestingly, no matter what their religious differences, they can find common ground in the American game of softball.

The Chosen argues about the conflicts between the two sects of Judaism. The novel's begins symbolically with a baseball game between the two parochial schools that Danny and Reuven attend. Potok sets up the game to highlight the difference between Danny's branch of Judaism and Reuven's. Here, the baseball game symbolizes the conflict between ultra-Orthodox and modern Orthodox. And also the beginning of the ,

game of the baseball, clarifies the further possible conflicts between these two sects of Judaism. Danny says to before the game starts, "I told my team we're going to kill you apikorism this afternoon" (10). Here Danny uses the words 'apikorism' that means the atheist Jews like Reuven. Danny's use of this word is a word of hatred that gives a glimpse of conflict within the Judaism represented by the Danny and Reuven.

Danny promises that his team will kill you "apikorism," a word originally used to describe a Jew who denied basic tenets of Judaism. That Reuven is struck by a ball off Danny's bat, is symbolic of their and their fathers' ideological battles. During the play of game Danny happens to hit the ball on the eye of Reuven because of which Reuven is hospitalized. This incident grows Reuven the extreme hatred toward Danny and he says, "Danny Saunder is making me sick? How he making me sick? He deliberately aimed at me, abba. He hit me deliberately" (27). Reuven's this statement is just his hatred for Danny's culture.

Potok, especially focuses on the conflicts between Hasidic and non-Hasidic Jews rather than between Judaism and American culture. But, Potok doesn't use the softball game primarily to distinguish Jews from Americans. Rather, he uses the game to contrast Reuven's Jewish community with Danny's. Reuven's League is coached by a gentile, secular American, public school gym teacher who uses military language is led by a rabbi, who sits on the sidelines throughout the game, with his nose buried in a book. Reuven's team members "Had no particular uniform and each of us wore whatever we wished (14). Danny's Hasidic team members, by contrast, "Were dressed alike in white shirts, dark pants, white sweaters, and small black skullcaps. In the fashion of very Orthodox, their hair was closely cropped. They all wore the traditional undergarment

beneath their shirts, and the tzitzit, the long fringes appended to four corners of the garment, came out above their belts and swung against their pants as they walked" (14).

The threat and temptation Danny and Rueven face do not come from secular America but from within their core communities. In fact, Danny's tension to identify himself in modern America escaping from the bondage of his cultural value and norms, has trapped him. American secularism has nothing to do with the Danny's problems his own culture has done to him as American popular culture is optional for but his culture is his obligation. This is how, Danny is in the trap of threat of his own culture as he doesn't see any meaning being confined within the Talmud and his religious faith. So, he is in conflict with himself of threat and temptation. The same kind of issue has been raised by Sanford Morovitz. He says, "Potok's protagonist as being caught between 'the threats and temptation of secular America in contrast to the security offered by their nuclear communities'" (17).

Of course, the protagonist Danny has been trapped by his own tradition and culture. In this sense, the conflict is seen more within the Judaism though it is assumed a fundamental conflict between monolithic modern Judaism and mainstream American culture. So, the main factor that has made the protagonists disillusioned by the existing culture. He is in the trap of dilemma and confusion or in Morovitz words threats and temptation. But, the protagonist (Danny) ultimately is tempted by American popular culture and he goes to Columbia for his Ph. D. This is Danny's assimilation with multicultural society. In an interview conducted by Laura Chavkin, Potok remarks:

Core to core cultural confrontation occurs when an individual is located at the heart of his or her own culture, knows that culture thoroughly,

constructs the world through the value system and frame of reference of that culture, and then encounters core elements from another culture; for example, Danny Saunders, situated in the heart of Hasidism in *The Chosen*, at the core of the general culture in which we all live – the psychoanalytic theories of Sigmund Freud, which are central in western secular culture. That's a core to core cultural confrontation. (154)

Danny's interest locates in the study of psychoanalysis of Freud which contradicts with his own culture. In another words when a particular culture encounters with another culture, it invites conflict. Here, in the novel too, Danny, a core of Hasidism happens to choose the core of the popular culture i.e. psychoanalysis of Freud, going against his culture. This kind of Danny's act according to the novelist is core to core confrontation in the cultures.

To be more clear about this issue Laura Chavkin says, "The novel revealed the clash of cultures that in a variety of forms can be seen in all of his subsequent novels. In this novel Danny Saunders, at the heart of his Hasidic culture, finds his value system challenged by psychoanalytic theory of Freud, a value system at the core of western secular culture" (147).

The global changing scenario in one hand and scope of choice in term of popular culture in America on the other are the source of dilemma and confusion to the Jewish New generation. And the choice is whether someone would be tradition Jews or a secularized American. Regarding this issue McClymond writes:

The choice presented was whether someone would be a traditional Jew or a secularized American – implying that one could not be both. Potok

understand that American life required choices- as suggested by the novel's multivalent title – but he presents more complex options. First, Danny and Reuven face differences within the Judaism. The central conflict within 'The Chosen' are conflicts between Jews with different understanding of what it means to be Jewish. (18)

The extract suggests that there is conflict in Jewish culture in term of the understanding. Be it the understanding of Reb Saunders in term of his narrow wall of Hasidism or be it the understanding of David Malter in term of his secularism. And also be it the understanding of Danny in term of his desire of the study of psychoanalysis that is against his culture. This is how, the different kind of understanding regarding different issues are also conflicts within Judaism. These kinds of conflicts are the products of multiculturalism in modern American secularism. Ultimately, all should come within the offer of liberalism to delete these conflicts. McClymond, again tries to clarify the same issue, and says:

Potok makes clear that even within the small world of Brooklyn Orthodox Judaism there is strong conflicts of opinion between members how much more, than can one expect to find conflicts of opinion within the broad spectrum of Christian America? (18)

Here, conflict in opinion between members of Jewish culture, according to McClymond, is not so problematic if we compare it with whole Christianity in America. It also means that Jewish's conflict of culture in term of opinion and understanding can be addressed as whole Christian Americans have assimilated the demand of modern American secularism. In the novel, within the Judaism, there are so many opinions

between them that are contradictory and source of cultural conflict too. For example, Reb Saunders has his own opinion regarding the Jewish massacre in World War II. He thinks that killings are the will of God. But, David Malter has different views on the same issue. He thinks that that is the time for American Jewry to do something to save the Judaism, not by the God. Moreover, Danny Saunder does have different opinion contrastive to his culture that is his choice of secular study. Whatever so it is, these all kind of contradiction, different understanding, opinions are resolved on the ground of multiculturalism and liberalism of American popular culture.

With the development of the plot of the novel, Danny and Reuven become friend. They spend their days together, celebrate their ‘Sabbath’, rest day, together. They meet their each other family. Any way their affinity becomes strong. But, when Reuven talks about the secular Palestine with Reb Saunder at the time of supper at one night. Reb Saunder can’t digest the issue of making Palestine a secular Jewish homeland. Then he bans Danny to meet and talk with Reuven. Why did Reb do that? Because of his different thought based on his religion that is far contrastive with Reuvan Malter. Here, Doesn’t Reb act give glimpse of conflict within Judaism? So, Reuven says:

I sat very still, listening to the registrar, and felt myself get angry. To hell with you, Danny Saunders, I thought. You could at least show you know I’m alive. To hell with you and your fanatic father. I became so completely absorbed in my anger that I stopped listening to the instruction. I had to ask lone of my classmates to repeat them to me after assembly. To hell with you, Danny Saunders, I kept saying to myself all that day. I can live without beard and ear locks with no trouble at all. You’re not the

center of the world, friend. To hell with you and your damn silence. (119)

Here, Reuven pours his anger after being departed with his friend Danny. Reuven scolds both Saunders father and son. The main factor to depart two friends is the difference in their respective culture. But, at last two become friends again after Reb surrenders with secularism or the influence of multiculturalism. The chief factor of conflict between Hasidic and secular Orthodox is the American Secularism in multicultural community. And there is also conflict of Jewish with American secularism or popular culture. Regarding this issue Walden argues, "The conflicts between Orthodox Jewish values with the world of western secular humanism became central to Potok's work from then on" (117).

These statements show the conflict between Hasidic Jewish and secular modern Jewish in western secular humanism. Here the chief factor for the conflict is, because of the multicultural society, one Jewish and another American popular country. The conflict arises due to the dilemma and disillusionment of Jews in new place. They are confused whether to assimilate popular American culture or hang with their own tradition. Moreover, some Jewish like David Malter has assimilated the popular culture for their daily easy life in new world. But, like Reb Saunderson don't want to surrender their faith of Hasidism in the name of secularism. And, because of the rigidity like that of Reb has made difficulties for the new generation. Danny, in one hand, is in the threat of his own culture and in the temptation of the secular culture on the other. So, the new generation has undergone with struggle and conflict to establish their new identity in new place. Ultimately, this sort of tension of new generation is resolved on the ground of multiculturalism or liberalism. Like this way, Bloom says, "Potok's main theme

was often the inherent conflicts that exist between Jewry and American values” (10).

Of course, if we go through the whole novel we find the conflicts just because of the different culture of Jewry and American values. Be it in term of generational conflict i.e. conflict between former generation and new generation. Be it cultural or religious conflict i.e. conflict between two sects of Judaism. Overall conflicts are the product of the multicultural society. The major conflict in the novel *The Chosen* is the conflict between the Jewish value and American value. So, the novelist resolves this conflict in the favor of multiculturalism and liberalism.

The conflicts appear when the two cultures’ norms and values are contradicted. The Jewish celebrate “Sabbath”, day for rest to pray and read the Talmud, a holy book. The Sabbath falls on Saturday. But, just opposite Saturday, in American culture is ordinary working day. So, here comes a question how can a Jew adjust his job and enjoy the Sabbath? This matter is contradictory here. This is how, is it not a clash in culture? Regarding the issue of Jewish Sabbath, Saturday is Jewish Sabbath, a day of rest, but it is an ordinary working day in American culture. Moreover, it is difficult for a business person to pray three times a day and remain faithful to Jewish dietary laws and other Jewish principle. A noted Jewish professional of the time, Rabbi Mordecai Kalpan, once remarked that the economic factor makes even the distinctive religious expression of Jewish life, particularly Sabbath observance; very difficult. This kind of cultural clash is resolved again in favor of multiculturalism and liberalism in term of compromise, assimilation as Danny does in the novel.

Obviously, there is conflict within Judaism, secular one and Hasidic one. There is also conflict between secular Jewish and secular culture of America. It means all kind of

Judaism have conflict with secular culture of America. Definitely, we can find several conflicts between Hasidic one and Secular culture of America. But, so called secular Jewish too, have conflict with secular culture of America. In the novel Reuven Malter is double marginalized as he can't assimilate American culture completely and can't be pure Jewish completely too. Here, McClymond says:

Within the first two pages of the book sets up unexpected opposition. It is not Hasidic Jews who are 'alien' to mainstream America. Rather the more liberal Orthodox community is 'alien' to the Hasidic community and mainstream America as well. In this particular corner of American Judaism Reuven is marginalized not for being to Jewish in the eyes of non-Jewish Americans, but for being Jewish enough. (12)

Obviously, There is seen the conflict of Hasidic community to American mainstream culture in the novel. But the modern Jews' conflicts are not noticeable with American mainstream culture as Potok reorients the reader so that we see the world through the perspective of the narrator Reuven. But, in the deeper level of novel there lies the conflict of so called secular Jewish like Reuven, with American secularism. So, the secular Jewish are double victimized and marginalized because of the clash of two cultures.

Besides the enter-conflict between two sect of Judaism, Potok's *The Chosen* comprises the tension of new generation to the former one. Danny belongs to the new generation Jew who does have the interest in psychology of Freud. But the tension lies upon Danny's interest of study the secular culture and his father's faith in ultra Orthodoxy and a tzaddik, wants his son to make like him. So the predicament of Danny is

genuine Universal problem in the multicultural society. In fact, Danny is in dilemma whether to hang on his religion being confined within the lines of the 'Talmud', Jewish holy book or to have secular knowledge of outer world. But, despite of his boundary of his religion he starts to go to the library to read the book. Reading secular book is forbidden in Jewish culture. So, Danny's daring to read secular book is a kind of revolution against his own culture and religion.

The following lines approve the interest of Danny: "You know he brooded, 'I read a psychology book last week in which the author said that the mysterious thing in the universe to man is man himself. We're blind about the most important things in our lives, our own selves'" (89). These lines said by Danny to Reuven make us clear that Danny longs to study psychology and mysterious things in universe related to the psychology. That's why, he extreme longing for psychology and his father's fanatic rigidity to make him tzaddik, contradicts within father and son and eventually this sort of act creates tension in Danny's family. Regarding this issue McClymond says, "The central conflict develops as Danny gradually considers rejecting the inherited position of tzaddik within his small community, choosing instead of dangerous world of Freud and psychoanalysis" (3).

Of course, as these lines clarify that the conflict begins with the Danny's rejecting the inherited position of tzaddik and his longing to enter the secular study of psychoanalysis of Freud. This sort of Danny's act makes his father very unhappy and the conflicts moves ahead. Abramson, on Potok's Depiction of Jewish and Non-Jewish World writes about the same conflict. Who says:

The world outside the Hasidic community has a crucial effect upon Danny Saunders, the central figure in the plot.. He tells Reuven that he feels “trapped” by the assumption that he will carry on the generation old tradition that his family provides the rebbe for the community. He finds study of ‘Talmud’ extremely limiting and just sneak off to the public library and seclude himself. (94)

Here, Danny Sounder shares his feeling to his friend Reuven. Danny feels himself trapped because he is influenced by the world outside in one hand and his obligation of his religion and culture on the other. He is fed up of with his culture and his religion. Despite of the prohibition of his culture he starts to read secular kind of books in the library. So, this kind of Danny’s act is a kind of revolution toward his existing traditional culture that creates conflict with his father and his culture. Danny’s act against his own culture is after all not more than his pursuit of his identity in the multicultural society. Like this way Judah Stampfer expresses his view that Danny suffers. Who says, “In its plot, the novel is the story of Danny Saunders, his training to be Hasidic rebbe, and his abandonment of it for a career in psychology. The choice is crystal clear; so is its resolution. The characters come in heavy outline in their station in life” (107).

The situation that Danny is going through is natural in multicultural society as there is conflict between Hasidism and secularism. And its resolution is on the ground of liberalism and multiculturalism. So, the resolution of Danny’s conflict with his culture and secular society determines his identity in American optimism.

The conflict takes place when one wants to have change in his life being isolated with existing culture that the former generation is following. Then the change demands

sacrifice or loss of something. Here, in the novel, is the same case with Danny. Influence of American optimism and secularism on Danny alienates him with his culture. So, he wants to give up his inherited position of tzaddik. This kind of influence American optimism on Danny invites conflict with his former generation i.e. his father or with his small community of Hasidism. Here, Danny's desire for secular world is natural in the changing scenario of 40s and 50s of twentieth century in America as the whole America was longing for change in term of democracy, multiculturalism, secularism, human rights and so on. So, Danny also does not want to be confined within the tradition of Hasidism rather he wants to move one step ahead than his tradition. Regarding this issue of conflict Bloom says in his note: "Potok subtly wants to invokes the idea of resistance regarding change as well as the danger of exposure in this passage forecasting two of the book's main theme" (4).

Danny dares to resist with his culture to establish his identity in the changing world. He also assimilates the change and danger of exposure. And, ultimately he becomes successful in his achievement. But, a point to note is that he does not totally neglect his culture but only he compromises with secularism based on the ground of his culture for his different identity slightly above than Hasidism. The following lines from the novel are ironic in term of fathers' and sons' different expectation that also creates conflict between them, different expectation that also creates conflict between them.

Reb Saunder looked at me and sighed again. 'Reuven,' he said very quietly, ' I want you to hear me out. No one lives forever. My father led his people before me, and my grandfather before him, and my great-grandfather before him. For six generation

now we have led our people. I will not live forever. Daniel will one day take my place. His voice broke, and he stopped. He put a finger to one of his eyes. Then he went on, his voice a little hoarse now. 'My son is my most precious possession. I have stopped and looked down at an open Talmud on his desk. 'How did he come to meet your father in the library? He asked, looking down at the Talmud. (81)

These lines clarify Reb Saunders' extreme belief and expectation from his son or he wants his son to inherit his position of tzaddik. But, the son is reading psychoanalysis of Freud. Here, do Reb Saunders' expectation and Danny's reading psychoanalysis tally each other? Of course, not and this sort of ironic condition invites conflict between them.

Reb Saunders wants to make his son Danny a tzaddik. But, Danny happens to choose secular study of psychoanalysis of Freud. Similarly, David Malter wants to make his son, Reuven, a mathematician rather than Reuven shows his interest to become a rabbi. This kind of tension between the fathers and sons is quite ironic. This too, regarding the same kind of issue Daniel says:

Reuven and Danny's discussion about Danny's photographic memory leads to Danny's revealing that he does not want to inherit his father's rabbinic position within the Hasidic community. The situation is ironic in that Danny does not want to be a rabbi but, is expected to become one; Reuven, on the other hand, does not want to become a mathematician, as his father wants him to but wants to become a rabbi. (19)

This kind of conflict between fathers and sons indicates the conflict between

former generation and new generation. So, the novelist resolves this problem on the ground of secularism. Regarding the same issue, the silence between the Reb Sounder and Danny also creates conflict within fathers and sons. Danny's comments about his father at the end of chapter 3 reveals the silent family life in which he has grown up and recall Book One's epigraph, from proverbs, and especially the lines, "Let your heart hold fast my words". And that his father, puzzlingly "wishes everyone could talk in silence" (71). So, Danny's silence suggests that he has serious doubts about Reb Saunders, both as a person and as a father".

Regarding the silence, Reb Saunders does not let Danny speak with Reuven because Reb thought that the Malter father and son had encouraged his so to read the secular kind of book. So, Reuven says, "Silence was ugly, it was black, it leered, it was cancerous, it was death" (118). Reuven hates Danny and his father as he is departed with friend by the culture which talks about silence. So, the silence also creates a kind of conflict in the character in the novel. The first scene in chapter 17 emphasizes Potok's theme of silence once again. However, silence now becomes more than an absence of language or, as Reuven stressed in the preceding chapter on equivalent to death.

Obviously, America is a big multicultural country where different groups almost from the Europe have settled their community. So each and every ethnic group does have challenge to establish their own kind of identity in secular society. In the process of the establishment of identity one should face internal conflict within his/her culture and other with new culture i.e. American secularism. In the novel *The Chosen* too, Danny has undergone to face the many challenges within his community and with modern American culture. So, the tension that Danny has faced for the question about how to live as

modern American culture. That's why the risk that Danny has faced not for other than his wrestle or conflict with the question about how to live as modern American within traditional religious framework. Regarding this issue McClymond Says, "The underlying concerns and conflicts are identical to other Americans conflicts. It suggested that people across various religions communities wrestle with questions about how to live as modern Americans within traditional religious frameworks" (20).

The kind of conflict that the new generation is going through is the collective problem of other Americans like Jewish. The new generation wants to live secular kind of life in America. But, this kind of consciousness of secularism is not found on the former Hasidic generation and as a result the new generations have undergone with many problem. Danny is one of the victim who is in dilemma because of his culture in one hand and the secularism on the other to identify him in modern America.

The conflicts comes in generational level when the new generation wants to assimilate with the modern American popular culture going against their own culture. By the same way Danny wants to assimilate the secular culture that invites conflict within himself and with his small Hasidic community along with his father. Regarding the new Jewish generation's assimilation to popular culture, Abramson says:

The background against which Danny must make his decision about how much to assimilate into popular culture is the changing political and cultural situation of Jews in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. For hundreds of years, Jews were excluded physically and intellectually from the predominantly Christian civilization. (13)

Behind the tendency of new generation toward the popular culture, the current

political and cultural situation plays a vital role. And, also they are not untouched of the influence of multiculturalism and liberalism in America.

Another conflict lies, because of two opposite vision in term of God, between Reb Saunder, a Hasidic one and another secular Orthodox David Malter. Reb Saunder believes that everything is on the hand of God. But, Mr. Malter's views on God is different, he believes that we have to do something rather by the god. One of the greatest contrast between Reb Saunder and David Malter in the novel is their individual reaction on massacre of Jews in the concentration camp during the World War II. Reb Saunder says to Reuven and Danny, " It is the will of the God , We must accept the will of the God" (99). He concludes that the killing is God's will. He can not do anything against the God's will. David Malter's reaction is different one. When Reuven tells his father about Reb Saunders' comment concerning God's will, Malter responds, " We can't wait for God if there is an answer, we must make it ourselves ---- it will have meaning only if we give it meaning" (98).

The different views of these two Jewish indicates a kind of tension within the brands of Judaism. A basic conflict between Mr. Malter and Reb Saunder is that Mr. Malter wants to do something in this world to help the survivors of the Nazi mass murder of Jews. In contrast, Reb Saunder can only wait at the slaughter of the Jews and says that it must have the will of God and he will send messiah to do something do solve the problem. The multicultural communities, in America, has created this kind of conflict in term of a vision toward the God.

The confrontation between David Malter and Reb Saunders about religious ideology spills over into Reuven and Danny's college life. Reuven's most of the friends

are non-Hasidic students, many of whom he went to high school with. But, he doesn't befriend with the Hasidic students. Likewise, Danny makes his friends Hasidic students only but not non-Hasidic ones. Each group of students confronts the other concerning the question of a Jewish homeland Palestine. Their conflicts parallels that of David Malter and Reb Saunders. The following extract from the novel clarifies about it. The extract is narrated by Reuven Malter.

I said quietly, not mentioning my father's name that a lot of people were now saying that it was time for Palestine to become a Jewish homeland and not a place where pious Jews want to die. The reaction on the part of the entire family was instantaneous it was as though someone had thrown a match onto the pile of straw. I could almost feel the heat that replaced the family warmth around the table. Danny went rigid and stared down at the plate in front of him. His brother let out a little whimper, and his sister and mother seemed frozen to their chairs. Reb Saunders stared at me, his eyes suddenly wild with rage, his beard trembling. And he pointed a finger at me that looked like a weapon”.

“Who are these people? Who are these people? He shouted in Yiddish, and the words went through me like knives. ‘Apikorism!’ ‘Goyim!’ Ben Gurion and his goyim will build eretz yisroel? They will build for us a Jewish Land? They will bring Torah into the land? Goyishkeit they will bring into the land, no Torah! God will build the land, not Ben Gurion and his goyim! When the messiah comes, we will have Eretz Yisroel, a Holy Land, not a land contaminated by Jewish goyim! (101)

These two paragraphs of novel show the rage of Reb Saunders as Reuven talks him about Palestine a Jewish homeland. Reb Saunders is in the opponent of making Palestine a Jewish secular homeland. He pours his rage upon the Reuven saying ‘Apikorism, ‘Goyim’ and so on. These words for the atheist Jewish like Malter. But David Malter is in the favour of making Palestine Jewish homeland. So, there is great conflict in their (Malters and Saunders) religious ideology. The following lines are the statement by David Malter in the novel. He says, “Some Jews say we should wait for God to send Messiah, we can’t wait for God! We must make our own Messiah! We must rebuild American Jewry! And Palestine must become a Jewish homeland! We have suffered enough! How long must we wait for the Messiah? (101)

The sharp contrastive religious ideology of Reb Saunder and David Malter shows tension within the Judaism. Whatever the ideology is Malter seems pragmatic regarding this issue of Palestine. “The issue of establishing a Jewish homeland in Palestine as contentious a matter between David Malter and Reb Saunders as the Holocaust is. In his hospital bed, recuperating from his heart attack, Mr. Malter tells his son and Danny that Jews can not wait for God to send a Messiah to solve the world’s – specially the Jews – problems. Jews must act now and establish a Jewish homeland. The only hope that Jews have rests on American Jewry. Reb Saunders, speaking to his family and Reuven on night at supper emphatically disagrees with Mr. Malter’s opinion, although he doesn’t know that Mr. Malter has spoken to Reuven and Danny. Reb Saunders’ position is that God – not Jews or any people, all of whom are sinful – is responsible for establishing a Jewish homeland. When God deems that the right time has come for such a homeland, a Messiah will come and establish it”.

Another difference between Reb Saunder and David Malter, functions at their relationship with their sons. Once Reuven returns home and speaks to his father about Danny's father's silence, Reuven gains a better understanding of why Reb Saunders wanted to speak to him alone without Danny in the room. Mr. Malter explains to Reuven that Reb Saunders spoke to Reuven knowing that Reuven would then speak to Danny. In this way, Reb Saunders has spoken to his son. However, Potok leaves it unanswered as yet why Reb Saunders deals with his son in silence. Reb Saunders cannot talk openly with Danny, but Mr. Malter has open, warm communication with Reuven. Potok again shows us the different world in which Mr. Reb and Mr. Malter live.

Lastly, in the novel's last scene, in which Reuven and Danny briefly discuss their futures, Danny's having shaved off his beard and cut off his earlocks symbolizes his entering a new more secular world. To Mr. Malter's question of whether or not Danny will raise his son in silence, Danny answers ambiguously: He will raise his son in silence if "he can't another way" (146). His answer emphasizes that Danny is not making a complete break with Hasidism; he will continue to observe Hasidic teaching and belief. However, he is also open to the possibility of change, which the phrase 'another way' suggests. Ultimately, then Danny rejects the trapped mind of his father and spiritual mentor, Reb Saunders. Potok's *The Chosen* consists of several conflicts and that are resolved in the favor of multiculturalism and liberalism. Specially, the novel shows the conflict in cultural and religious level. Though, there is conflict in the name of secularism, no Potok's Jewish character consider abandoning their Jewish identity: rather, their choices center on how to integrate their religious identities in relationship with secular modernism, what Potok himself termed core-to-core confrontation.

Conclusion

In the novel *The Chosen*, Potok serves different level of conflicts: Conflict within Judaism, conflict between Jewish culture and American culture. However, Potok's intention is not to problematize the Jewish culture and tradition with American culture rather he wants Jews to be modified within their reference of religious framework.

In the novel, Danny and Reuven never consider abandoning their Jewish identity; rather, their choices center on how to integrate their religious identities in relationship with secular modernism, what Potok himself termed core to core confrontation. These choices are played out in very concrete ways in *The Chosen*. Most obviously at the end of the novel, Danny shaves his beard and ear locks, choosing to look one way when the rest of his community looks another. He also breaks off a long-standing engagement in an arranged marriage. Reuven develops and interpretive response to a problematic Talmud passage using text critical methodologies, a strategy rejected by traditional Orthodoxy. In all these examples, Potok speaks to general readers wrestling with how to integrate their religious identity with secular modernism.

Interestingly, Reb Saunders, the most dogmatic character in the novel, seems to change as well. He realized that he can not keep Danny, with his brilliant mind, sequestered from the modern world. When Reb Saunders asks Danny if he will shave off his beard and cut his earlock when he goes away to college, Danny nods his head "yes". And when Reb then asks him if he will continue to observe Hasidic custom, Danny again nods. Because Danny vows to remain faithful to Hasidic Customs, Reb Saunders seems more accepting of his son's decision than of Danny had completely broken from his

father's religion. However, the Reb is still saddened at the 'loss' of his son. He knows that the secular world calls to Danny and that he cannot force his son to accept the religious proposition. So, Danny's vows to remain faithful to his culture and take his secular study ahead simultaneously and the Reb Saunders' indirect consent in Danny's wish are the consequences of multiculturalism, liberalism or the notion of modern secularism in America.

This is how all kind of conflicts of misunderstanding in term of generational conflict, cultural conflict, ideological conflict and other are resolved in the favor of multiculturalism and liberalism in *The Chosen*.

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