

**Tribhuvan University**

**Study of Unequal Woman Man Relationship in Saul Bellow's *Ravelstein***

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**Approval Letter**

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### **Abstract**

The present research work deals with the humiliating position of the female and their unequal relationship with males in Bellow's novel, *Ravelstein* and brings the consciousness towards the inequalities prevalent in the society. It studies the characters living with disharmony and disintegration. It explores the theme of suffering and their tragic experience because of disharmony and hatred. Bellow presents his female character as a sufferer of patriarchal ideology. His investigation and presentation of feminine consciousness is directed toward an objective account of women's emotions and tries to identify the women's experience and needs. He exhibits awareness of institutionalized inequalities towards women and man relationships. He often seems to oppose the pre-set social order and wants to make reform the inequalities dominant in society. The relationship between man-women is not harmonious due to patriarchal ideology. The male ideology has hindered and prevented women from realizing the women's productive and creative possibilities.

**Contents**

	Page No.
Acknowledgements	
Abstract	
Chapter I: Introduction	1
Chapter II: Feminist Perspective	10
Theories on Woman Man Relationship	20
Sexuality and Gender Inequality	24
The Patriarchy/Power Debate	27
Chapter III: Analysis of <i>Revelstein</i>	31
Chapter IV: Conclusion	47
Works Cited	

## I. Introduction

Saul Bellow writes about human relations in modern American society. In majority of his works there are the issues of woman man relations. His investigation and presentation of feminine consciousness is directed toward an objective account of women's emotions assessing American womanhood's confrontation with male reality. He attempts to identify woman experience and needs and exhibits consciousness of institutionalized inequalities towards woman man relationship.

One of his most important and recent novels, *Ravelstein*, has been widely acclaimed for its portrayal of women men relationship. In the novel there is a complex relationship between female and male. This novel evokes the values and tradition of American patriarchal culture while trying to answer the questions as to how a woman can acquire happiness in life.

Saul Bellow in this novel explores the themes of political, technological, socio-economic, cultural and inter-cultural importance which have impact on woman-man relationship. He highlights the female characters by giving them an active role and trying to make them handle the novel to fulfill the feminine voice for equal rights, equal responsibilities and expectations of women. He shows that woman can also be active participant in the society.

Woman man relation is such a prominent matter of everyday life that without bringing this relation neither practical world nor the literary world becomes perfect. The difference between male and female was not constructed and shaped by nature but by society. The society for centuries believed that the different characteristics that women and men exhibited were determined by biological difference or were divinely ordained. It included ideas and values about what was masculine and what was

feminine including the stereotype that women were emotional and men rational. People define certain characteristics as masculine or feminine, certain activities as appropriate for men and others for women and certain norms for relationship between women and men. The conditions of women's and men's daily lives and their relative position within their societies are embedded in social, cultural, political frameworks and institutions. Woman man relation is not universal but varies from culture to culture and sometimes community to community. It is dynamic and changes over time.

Biologically and socially, there are both similarities as well as differences between the male and female. The two sexes, in fact, are more similar than different. However, differences are often more highlighted. "Gender is not merely a system of classification by which the male female is biologically sorted, separated and socialized. It is also an axis along which power hierarchy and status are distributed and rationalized" (Sajal 124). We are allocating to the male and female sexes specific and distinctive attributes and roles. Likewise, we also impose different sets of expectations on them. Within the context of female-male differences and similarities, the notion of sex comprises the biological properties of person whereas the notion of gender comprises the social properties of a person.

In patriarchal society, a woman is dependent upon man throughout her life. She needs the shoulders of man to lean up on. The father protects the women during childhood, the husband during her youth and son in her old age. A woman does not enjoy freedom and independent. Women are taught to be shy, gentle and dignified as a person pure and faithful as a wife and thoughtful and compassionate as mother.

The role of men and women within a given socio-cultural context may be flexible or rigid, similar or difference and complementary or conflicting. A society's

cultural norms and values support inequality which has direct impact on human relations. Inequality is established through the efforts of powerful individuals and institutions. Power is the foundation of all forms of inequality. It describes the social meaning of male and female and what is considered appropriate behavior for men and women. It shares, social cultural and psychological aspects linked to male and female through particular social context.

“Man women relationship in American society and culture is based in love and sacrifice whether matrimonial, filial or sibling. The main string that keeps man-women relationship together is sacrifice” (Sexena 22). It is this quality in women that makes her such a survivor, emerging from pain, deprivation neglects the countless traumas to meet life head on undefeated. It is the power of her spirit that makes her undoubtedly one of the most beautiful women in the world.

The spirit of the age influences woman -man relationship and the portrayal of woman man relationship is not new in literature. Fielding, D.H Lawrence, Virginia Woolf dealt with this relationship. Jewish writers Saul Bellow, Norman Mailer, Philip Roth also deal with the same theme.

Saul Bellow’s novels focus mostly on the Jewish immigrants’ suffering, their experience of anti-Semitism and holocaust, and unequal woman man relationship. In *Ravelstein*, representation of women- men relationship reveals the Jewish and patriarchal ideology. All female characters relations with man are feeble and are presented in the negative reference.

The novel *Ravelstein* of Saul Bellow revolve on the central concern of woman man relationship and experience of life in multi ethnic urban setting of America. Bellow concerns on, why is there inequality in woman man relations. Bellow categorizes human relationship into two types: primary and secondary. Secondary

relations are ritualized interactions between two or more individuals playing specific roles who come into contact for a limited purpose. Is inequality inevitable in woman man relationship? We can see the representative character and their characteristics who struggle for the harmonious human relationship, in Saul Bellow's writing.

Bellow exhibits that social power relation between the women and men are made very blatant. He draws most of his fictional materials from the Jewish communities sufferings. Tremendous physical deprivation, poverty, superstition and inequalities prevalent in communities became the issues of his writings. War, brutality, depression, unemployment, inequalities and wide spread of AIDS are the characteristic themes of his writings. His characters are the revelations of the temporalities inhuman affairs and the strange, unusual tendencies of bad attitudes or desires rather than instructional types. Bellow also accommodates the human conscience, responsibility and love in his works. Bellow pays more interest in human relationship.

Bellow recounts how he was convinced that the horrors of the twentieth century has sickened and killed humanistic beliefs with their deadly relations. Bellow is an optimist, his novels are built on these dichotomies and paradoxes and written in a language that is almost vibrant and resourceful. His Jewish heritage and his several divorces are shared by his many of his characters. Bellow himself said that his Jewish heritage is a gift, a piece of good fortune with which one does not quarrel, but he also insisted that he is not a "Jewish" writer but a American writer who happens to be a Jew.

Bellow's achievement is to have imposed upon the contending-forces in his fiction-life and death, optimism and despair, reason and feeling, self and brotherhood-an idea of order. He has always known that the novelist begins at a great death of

distraction and disorder. Out of chaos of experience and tensions of conflicting claims, he has sought to create a coherent and compelling vision of experience. But it has been a tentative endeavor marked by a sad, sane, comic skepticism about his power of the artist or intellectual to affect the world in any way. The emphasis upon the self, optimism, and feeling must be understood in relation to Bellow's attitude towards death he believes that one can not understand life until one comes to terms with death. Such kinds of themes in his writing help him to win the Noble Prize for literature in 1976.

The novel is set on the background of rapid transmission of AIDS of late 20<sup>th</sup> century. The novel is primarily about love: Ravelstein's ravenous appetite for philosophy and gossip about love and Chick's love for his friend Ravelstein and for his much younger life saver wife, Rosamund. Female characters are accused of witch, evil and they do have the life of confinement, suppression and oppression. Vela, a competent professor in a university is very popular. Besides her competency, her husband Chick doesn't pay any attention on their relationship. Ultimately he marries a young student of Abe Ravelstein.

The second part of the book is filled with possible models for friendship: the battles, an aging married couple whom Ravelstein talks out of a joint suicide plan; but the friendship between Chick and Ravelstein looms largest. This mutual understanding presupposes certain frankness: "You couldn't, as the intimate and friend of Ravelstein, avoid knowing a great deal more than you had an appetite for" (Bellow 113), but not confidentiality, Ravelstein was crazy about gossip and his friends were given points for the racy items they brought. And it was not a good idea to assume that he would keep the lid on your confidences. The principle of the friendship then is the naked truth nothing is to be off limits.

Critics have diversely commented up on Saul Bellow's *Ravelstein* since its publication in 2000. Much have been said and written about Jewish morality in American society, religious practices, and homosexuality and gender inequalities. Adam Philip in *Bellow and Ravelstein* presents that inequality is characteristics of society there are number of obstacles for women's participation in powerful positions, politics, which includes patriarchy, lack of family support. Where he further says:

Chick and Ravelstein conspire in Bellow's familiar idealization of a certain kind of women. What analysts refer to as the wished for the mother of infancy-Chick's young wife, Rosamund, for example, is some one with whom there was no subject raised which she did not immediately understand. (7)

The above arguments capture wide range of human sentiments. The sentiment regarding the gender is crucial in the novel. Chick and Ravelstein creates hindrances in the progress of female. Vela was a prominent professor of Physics so they conspire her to dominate. Similarly, in writing about Ravelstein's homosexuality, Bellow the terrible things happen off stage he says "Ravelstein is often getting Chick to face various facts-a key word in the novel—about himself and other people. Chick says in an awkward moment, destroyed by his reckless sex habits" (Philip 8).

Another well known critic Wolf Arnold Jacob says that *Ravelstein* reflects the reality of love in much devotional and emotional binding and contrasts the men's doubtful love towards their woman and men always lack the genuine love and respects. Marriage is a legal union of a grown up man and women as husband and wife which determines particular duties and rights to both of them but here, marital relation is considered as an obstacle. He views:

Chick displays this innocence, this naiveté, in any number of ways: in the immediate context where, he refers to the “humongous divorce settlement”, he was stuck with a marriage built, Ravelstein insists, on Chick’s susceptibility to false self presentations. (Jacob 14)

The intimate relationships of most people with other humans are among the most important aspect of their lives, if they do not compromise the single most important one. Such relationships are undoubtedly colored strongly by gender roles .Nicholas David k presents that historically the roles of men and women within marriages have reflected their roles with in society. He views that laws and customs have traditionally restricted women’s opportunities, limited their legal rights and required them to be under the protection and control of a man where he further says:

As we never learn, for example, how Chick and Ravelstein met, though we know they met relatively in late in life this impressionistic approach contrasts with the more direct storytelling that Chick uses in depicting his vain ex-wife Vela and his lovely new wife Rosamund.

(33)

The above arguments show that the growing relationship between Ravelstein and Chick results in divorce of Chick with Vela. When Chick’s and Ravelstein’s relations develops that brings the disharmony between Chick and vela ultimately that results in divorce. So here he address her ex-wife Vela as a “vain” and marries a younger wife Rosamund.

Similarly in another context he further says:

Chick does keep secrets from Ravelstein, notably when it comes to Chicks marriages, he holds back from Ravelstein while married to Vela-a sight for which Ravelstein rebukes him and keeps his

relationship with Ravelstein's student Rosamund a secret for the first year that they're together. These lucane do not mean that Chick places his romantic relationships over his friendship with Ravelstein. Chick clearly loves his new wife Rosamund. He speaks very highly of her and flattered by her attention. (34)

Similarly, critics like Andrew Sullivan view this novel from gay perspective. He says female characters always quest for the devotional love but in the lack of such love female show their voice of unfulfilled love silently. He says:

Imperative view of romantic love as a way to transcend the chaos of modernity, view that Ravelstein finest achievement was his perpetual ability to critique human love and to do so without revealing his homosexuality. In Bellow's words Bloom had a gift for reading reality, the impulse to put your loving face to it and press your hands against it part of the reality was Bloom's need for and witness to the love of one man for another. One day, there will be a conservatism civilized enough to deserve him. (21)

Due to the growing relationship among Ravelstein, Chick and Nikki, there is disharmony in the family relationship, and relation between woman and man in a family. Vela suspects the behavior of her husband Chick because she knows that Ravelestein is a gay. A socially approved relationship, various rights and obligations of family life are hindered due to this homosexual relationship. Similarly, Adam Phillips writes in *Bellow and Ravelstein* as

the complications that homosexuality throws Ravelstein into both the character, and the book itself are pertinent because, Ravelstein is a novel peculiarly troubled by evasiveness. As a fictional character,

Ravelstein, like many of Bellow's heroes is someone forever exercised and energized by other people's concealments and duplicities. (9)

Similarly, Freedman Adam writes, "Chick credits Rosamund's devotion with his continued survival and speaks reverently of her capacity to love, but while he recognizes the depth of Rosamund's love, he does not seem capable, exactly, of returning it kind (Adam 8).

Alka Sexena warns the male physical superiority. The superiority feeling counts the women as inferior, submissive and subservient. For the healthy woman-man relationship woman are awaiting silently, patiently and in great where she says woman man relationship should not suffer due to male physical superiority. One account of this strength, men consider that women are inferior and hence should be subservient and submissive. The superior attitude of men is the root cause of female dissatisfaction. Women have suffered in silence, waiting patiently for the day to come when they will be treated with respect and love in the true sense.

Most of the critics and encyclopedias recapitulate the novel as Jewish text, autobiographical text, gay criticism, and feminist perspective too. But more strikingly, there are several events, performances on which female male relationship have been presented diversely. This novel portrays a picture of fragmented woman man relationship in the modern American society.

This research aims at looking at the unequal woman-man relationship as seen in the novel *Ravelstein*. Some feminist perspectives as well as gender issues will be made use of the look at the relationship between woman and man.

## **Chapter II: Feminist perspective**

The feminist movement is concerned with the representation of women in literature and the position of women in society. The primary aim of the movement is to free women from oppressive restraints, especially the cultural restraint of society which fixes the women's identity within narrow boundaries. The main strain of feminist movement strongly refuses the cultural definition of woman which attempts to fix women's identity within the male dominated canon.

Feminism as a movement declares that women are also human beings equal to men and it is only when both stand, their hands joined together, can the foundation of natural law and custom be and it is a voice against the inadequacy, the distortion as well as ideologies of the males. Awareness of women's issues spread more and more able women came to the forefront. Women now were admitted to a number of trades, a wave of urgent awareness spread among women and many women became involved in the programmes for women's emancipation. They renounced and rejected the life of subordination and domination and hoped for independent life in a patriarchal circle.

Among many feminists, it has long been established as usage to make feminine (and masculine) represent social constructs (patterns of sexuality and behavior imposed by culture and social norms) and to reverse 'female' and 'male' for the purely biological aspects of sexual difference. As Simone de Beauvoir said that "femininity was a cultural construct; one isn't born a woman; one becomes one" (qtd in Rubin 67).

Seen from this perspective, patriarchal structures are universal and there is no society where women are not subordinate to men at least in some respects. Male – dominated discourse persists in seeing the subordination of women in families or social life as natural and therefore unchangeable.

From the very beginning, society has been structured according to patriarchal domination. In fact, patriarchy is the rule or government by a man with authority passing through the male line from father to son. The concept of patriarchy is equally related to two different ideas: that the relations between the sexes are not only personal but political and the relations between the sexes are built on inequality as Rubin comments “Patriarchy is the shorthand term for the political economy of sex, gender and procreation ... sex is sex, but what counts as sex is ... culturally determined and obtained just as economic activity is” (Rubin 165-6).

According to this concept, women are defined as lacking male authority, male power, and lacking male sexual organs. It privileges masculine sexuality (male phallus) as the symbol of power. Possession of masculine sexuality, phallus, made men creates the rules and norms around it. This idea of phallus as the center of rule is phallogocentrism which tries to establish the superiority of the phallus. Thus, the fundamental issue of feminist criticism is the recognition of such patriarchal structure of the society. Feminist try to uproot it or wipe it. Regarding the phallus, Freud introduced the concept of phallus (penis envy) in women. Feminist minimizing the power of phallus argue that there are certain female experiences which are completely unknown to male ovulation, menstruation, parturition. But Freud argued, they are envious of phallus rather they pose certain questions on women’s experience to men.

Under the patriarchy, women have in general been forced to occupy a secondary place in the world in relation to men, a position comparable in many respects with that of racial minorities in spite of the fact that women constitute numerically at least half of the human race. Furthermore, this secondary standing is not imposed of necessity by natural feminine characteristics but rather by strong environmental forces of educational and social tradition under the purposeful control

of men. The women have in general failed to take a place of human dignity with free and independent existence to associate with men on a plane of intellectual and professional equality, a condition that not only has limited their achievement in many fields but also pervasive social evils and has had a particularly vitiating effect on the sexual relations between women and men.

However, removing deep rooted structures of the society is not an easy task. It took a long time to realize and establish women's identity. The feminist point of view is that, since women are equal participants in social construction, they should not be suppressed by patriarchal domination. This is the result of the feminist movement of 1960s which emerged as the result of a long struggle of women to win equal status and rights in society.

Feminism at first appearance contains both narrow and broad aspects. It is narrow in the sense it admits only those adherents and those sympathetic to the movement which broadly proclaims a revolution in all relations between the sexes. The aim was to end the notion that one's biological sex was superior or inferior to the other. Before the first quarter of the twentieth century, women seemed to be merely asking for the right to vote. Basically though women's voice was closely attached to politics, it wanted the removal of social, political, cultural, economic and other discriminations based on sex. And the vision of feminists encompassed economics, social rules and sexuality for the emancipation from sexual stereotyping of any kind.

The conflict between traditional ideas about women's place and increasing involvement in female activities and frustrated a growing number of modern women. While the feminist dilemma concerning women's place in society was at its height, Simon de Beauvoir published the book, *The Second sex* (1949), which played an important role in changing the outlook of women's thought and established the clear

idea of the fundamental questions of modern feminism in the early fifties. Beauvoir claims, “women have been made inferiors and the oppression has been compounded by men’s belief that women are inferiors by nature” (qtd in Seldon 135).

A text on feminism *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979) by Gilbert and Gubar appeared. It concentrated on the suppressed female. It is a kind of realization of female identity. By the eighties, women’s experiences have been placed at the center of attention. Gilbert and Gubar locate female territory in its larger context. They examine the broader along with female writers addressing themselves as freely as men writers. Feminist criticism has established the historical relativity of gender definitions. The concept of patriarchy has been revealed as man made idea according to the masculine purpose. Women now are well aware of patriarchy as male domination over female. They are capable of exposing the true identity of patriarchy and realizing the significance of their own identity.

In fact the projection of *writing the body* by French feminists is a revolutionary effort to provide authority to women’s writing based on the genital and libidinal difference from men. The concept of female world itself is paradoxical. It not only begins diversity among but also difference between them and the male world. Females by crating their separate world are creating more complexity in feminist thinking. Since the division between the male and female, the concept of superiority and inferiority automatically appears in society. So this sex-based division will work until division of labor ends. It is certain that experiences are different between sexes but work division invites problems regarding women’s independence.

Virginia Woolf’s, *A Room of One’s Own* (1928) is the study of women’s image and it has been studied as a representative of female writing by feminists. Some

critics turned linguists to get at the origins of oppression in language. Concerning the origin of language, feminists concluded that there is nothing like masculine or feminine language. Some worked with the writing of women in colors. They powerfully developed the theories of female psychology, anthropology and myth to broaden the grasp of the works of women artists. Due to the keen desire to observe art, feminists became particular about female writings, and asserted and highlighted them. According to Myra Jehlen, “Feminist thinking is really rethinking, an examination of the way certain assumptions about women, and the female characters enter in to the fundamental position, organize a kind of thinking again” ( 75).

The primary concern of feminism is self-creation through thinking and rethinking. Feminism is not merely theory but also the application of feminist writing and female identity. Since feminism is a part of literary criticism, it calls for intellectual collaboration. To be intellectual requires compassion, commitment and community.

The overall view is that feminist literature in particular patriarchal society is to free women. Feminists say that only a feminist struggle will significantly change relations between men and women that concerns issues such as sexuality, violence, control of women’s bodies by men, the cultural policies of dress, and other representation of gender and so on. The claim by women who regard their men folk and then ask for the same rights. In these terms revolutionary men too have spoken of the need for equality of women. Oliver Tambo of the African National Congress, argues as Allport quotes, “men must regard women as equals, help emancipate them in the home, so they can politically be equal” (15).

So, from the women’s side as well as from the men’s sides sharp voices are not to be heard for the equality between woman and man. Particularly the feminine

voices are from the west and though raise and claim or advocate for equality they are seen very stuck to the ideas of domination and are blind to other aspects as Jelhen

Quotes Nawal El Sadaawl:

Western feminist were not aware of the class struggle of economic problems, of social problems, of the real suffering of the majority of men and women struggling for their livelihood everyday .They concentrated, solely on issues of sexuality and male domination ... we must not merely fight against patriarchy but against the patriarchal class system. ( 349)

The autonomy of feminists movement should not be to argue for the continuing oppression of some women (Black, working class, third world) for the benefit of others (privileged, western, white, middle class). There should be a feminist movement consisting of women around the world united under a homogenous political banner with its enemy being men and patriarchal structures, or it might be a movement that acknowledges the variations and complexities in the condition of women around the world, accepts the struggles over racism and imperialism but says the major struggle must be the one against male domination. It might be a constellation of different localized movements, which movement engage now in a struggle for higher wages for all workers, now in a struggle for women's control of reproductive choice, members are united by only one belief that there are forms of oppression based on gender differences and that these must ultimately be addressed if women are to achieve satisfactory autonomy in society.

The potential for feminism lies in the apparent similarities of women's position around the world gender based mutilation, unequal access to economic, legal and political resources compared with men in each country and evaluation of women,

at least by official culture and most men of lesser status, whether by identification with nature, emotion or some other pollutant of reason or religion. As Elsa Atkin says, “It frightens me still that in spite of hundreds of years of different cultural traditions in so many different countries, the issue concerning women are virtually universal and therefore so much harder to change or eradicate” ( 96).

Therefore every individual should confess themselves from within and the equality should come from every conscious mind, then only the real women’s emancipation, harmonious relationship and equality will be possible, otherwise it will be enclosed within the theoretical books and the practical life will remain as it was.

Psychoanalytic offer one of the most influential and thought provoking arguments about the making of masculinity and femininity. Though these arguments refer to the making of individual identities, as individual nature from infancy to adulthood, they possess a historical dimension since the constitution of individual women and men always appears within specific historical and social contexts.

Freud’s theory of human consciousness is central to his understanding of masculinity and femininity. For Freud, one of the most important phases in a child’s psychological growth that period when the ego is stabilized is the time when the child discovers that it is an entity in itself. In Freud’s scheme of things, the wishes that are refused do not go away, they are repressed, pushed deep down into the domain of the id and there they remain until in adult life they reemerge, at exactly the time when the young experience love and courtship.

This school of criticism has inculcated many ideas from Jacques Derrida and Jacques Lacan. The prominent feminist figure such as Annie Leclerc, Margurite Duras, Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray and Helene Cixous raised the issues from the unconscious, the body, subjectivity and phallogocentric discourse. According to Teresa

Brennan the impetus for exclusion and for what she calls the “impasse in psychoanalysis and feminism” can be located in the question of social change. The question of social change concerns the theory and the practice of eliminating women’s oppression. The question of social change is central to feminist politics, where the identity of feminism is confounded. These feminists use Lacan’s work to address the question of how identities and relationship are fashioned and how male hegemony is secured. However, since Leland cannot imagine how Lacanian theory might lead to strategies for social change and change in gender relationship. In her view, “feminist psychology is political psychology precisely because its accounts of internalized oppressions are given in the service” (qtd in Elliot 6).

Kristeva, Cixous and Irigaray challenge the inherent world view of patriarchal structure. Kristeva challenges the rigidity of the symbolic order. She suggests that woman can work in a different and more fluid open space. Her challenge was against the Lacanian symbolic order of language and culture based upon the Phallogocentric idea. The Lacanian symbolic order is against the feminist ideology because it is centered around the phallus and father. Against it, Kristeva considered symbolic view of phallus as an inappropriate idea. In greater extent Kristeva follows Lacan, criticizes him for undermining the importance of pre-oedipal state. According to her, feminine language comes from the pre-oedipal state, from what she calls “semiotic” zone prior to child’s entry into language, which posses cultural norms, the rules of patriarchy. However, she believes that total reliance on such language becomes the cause of further political marginalization and domination. Ultimately, she alerts us that semiotic works with the symbolic but it creates difficulty to subvert its logic and rupture its order. Helene Cixous subverts

the binary between male and female asserting that there are not only two sexes but multiple.

Helene Cixous, another prominent figure of French feminist movement, has some reaction influenced by the Derridian Deconstruction. Her attempt is to establish female superiority over males. Her essays *The Laugh of Medusa* (1976) is a celebrated manifesto of women's writing which calls for women to put their *bodies* into their writing (Seldon 150). Her suggestion to women writers is to "write yourself, your body must be head, only then will the immense resources of thee unconscious spring forth" (Seldon 150). According to her total suggestion, she wants women to be aware of their own pleasure, libido, identity and existence. Her view is that women must be free to feel herself as independent. Helene Cixous in *The Laugh of the Medusa* makes it clear as:

Men have committed the greatest crime against women. Insidiously, violently; they have led them to hate women, to be their own enemies, to mobilize their immense strength against themselves, to be the executants of their virile needs. They have made for women as anti-narcissism! A narcissism which loves itself only to be loved for what women haven't got! They have constructed the infamous logic of anti-love. we the precious, we the repressed of culture, our lovely mouth gagged with pollen, our wind knocked out of us, we the labyrinths, the ladders the trampled spaces, the bevvies-we are black and we are beautiful. (214)

Irigaray turns the idea of lack (woman as lack, lack of penis) in to the idea of excess and challenges the binary opposition that is evident in the phallogocentric system of language. Women don't fit in to a binary opposition because they are more; they are

in excess of the left side of the opposition (penis/nothing, male/female). Luce Irigaray in *From this Sex Which is Not One* argues and makes it clear as:

For woman is traditionally a use-value for man, an exchange value among men; in other words, a commodity. As such she remains the guardian of material substance, whose price will be established in terms of the standard of their work and of their need/desire, by “subjects” workers, merchants, consumers. Women are marked phallicly by their fathers, husbands, procurers. And this branding determines their value in sexual commerce. Woman is never anything but the locus of a more or less competitive exchange between two men, including the competition for the possession of mother earth. There remains, however, the condition of underdevelopment arising from women’s submission by and to a culture that oppresses them, uses them, and makes of them a medium of exchange, with very little profit to them. Except in the quasi monopolies of masochistic pleasure, the domestic labor force and reproduction. (281)

Helene Cixous subverts the binary between male and female asserting that there are not only two sexes but multiple. Patriarchal culture’s privileging of the left side of binary, the penis, subordinates multiplicity. Cixous insists that women must write their bodies and unfold their unconscious. For Irigaray female language is more diffuse, fluid like her sexuality which is multiple. All of these feminist writers regard maternal as empowering. Yet these are some feminists who have questioned this overemphasis on body as biologically reductive and politically impotent.

## **Theories on Woman Man Relationship**

We human beings are social animals, we live in society and so involve in social relationships, interactions with other people, without which the society could not run smoothly. And in the human knowledge various fields have been intertwined and here the focal point is the social aspect and within it the psychology.

There are number of social psychological theories dealing with human interaction which help us to understand the possible effects of woman man roles stereotypes on various human relationships. People who remain in a close primary relationship either originally agree on most issues deemed important by those involved into such agreement overtime. Individuals who continue to participate in a close relationship feel the same way about most fundamental things. A female who rejects the traditional feminine roles is not appropriate to be found in a stable, long term relationship with male who accepts that role as appropriate. There are basically two possibilities when a fundamental lack of agreements exists: the relationship may end, or one or both individual's attitudes may change. Indeed the feminine gender role encourages women not to become too committed to any attitudes that may conflict with those of mate, that is, women are encouraged to defer to a male's opinion. Thus there is a built-in tendency for this kind of circumstance not to reach the point of real conflict in that particular type of relationship.

Females are systematically taught that one of the most important rewards they can receive is an overt display of warmth and affection; the withdrawal of this constitutes a cost. In past time, males are not taught to value overt affection and indeed, may even teach unmanly. Females are also taught to value dependency—psychological and financial on males, for whom support may well, and come to constitute a cost. Males on the other hand, are systematically taught to value more

concrete rewards, such as money or service, as well as power or dominance and prestige. People seek to have their needs met by others and effect that women men's roles stereotype have on this matter of relationship. Fulfillments of such needs constitute reward, but it might well entail a cost for the interaction partner. Women and men's role tend to decrease the ability of individuals to achieve need satisfaction and increase the costs of granting such satisfaction to others.

Most Americans suspects that platonic relationship between a male and female are something other than they appear. Husbands or male lovers, probably even more than their mates with suspicion and jealousy ( Marger 178).To interpret friendship in terms of an increase in the cost of the relationship and reduction of the rewards, thus creating an element of instability in both relationship. According to the tradition and the masculine mystique, wives and female lovers are property not to be shared with others. Platonic relationship between a male and a female will elicit suspicions if either is romantically committed to someone else. Both male and female gender role stereotypes encourage individuals to define members of other sex in broadly sexual terms. "Females are taught to view males primarily as potential mates or husbands, namely the object of true love. Males learn to view females primarily as sex objects to be exploited if possible, married if necessary"(Marger 180).

In any platonic relationship there is a built in dynamic encouraging one or both participants to redefine the situation. Even though platonic relationships between males and females tend to be short lived and unstable, they cast a very interesting light on gender role phenomena. Often the relationship begins with the male approaching the female he knows in order to confide something and seek advice. Male asks her for date and they discover that, although they are sexually attracted, they do like one another. Many males confide things to female friends they would

never broach with other males. Basically the masculine stereotypes discourage males from speaking openly with one another about their fears, anxieties or weakness.

Males' expectations are that female will function basically as compassionate listener and often supports each expectation.

Compounding the inequality of the sexes is the fact that our gender role stereotypes have left the emotional expression and human caring to femininity. It is difficult to imagine a genuine loving relationship involving the stoical, unemotional, instrumentally oriented, dominating, aggressive, and competitive creature of masculine stereotype.

Both males and females view a man's primary function as that of economic provider, there is no socially defined and sanctioned expectation that he will confide, comfort or share with a romantic partner, and without these there is scarcely love. (Balswick & Collier 197)

It is equally difficult to imagine a male developing deep respect for passive, dependent that would be "feminine". As their relationships deepen and a broader range of their behavior is revealed, they begin to see signs of these unexpected traits in another. From this point the relationships may go in a number of directions. It may simply end as one or both find that the costs of having their expectations unmet is too high. When this occurs people look back and wonder what it was they ever saw in the other person. Such a response usually results only if the pair has not yet made a binding commitment to one another, but the relatively high divorce rate today attests to the fact that it may occur even after such a commitment has been made.

In order to exercise power, a person needs superior resources, such as physical strength or financial clout. These resources can be used by one party to coerce the

other. Males have superior power resources, physically and financially. They can thus continue to make binding decisions even though their wives may no longer think it appropriate. Even when wives are employed they are considered as junior partners rather than equals, since they earn less and defined as less career committed than their husbands. Major decisions and major purchases are made primarily according to the husband's wishes.

When people lack power in a relationship, they often must resort to manipulation in order to get their need fulfilled. Wives have long been defined as manipulative getting their way by tricking their husbands rather than by direct or assertive behavior. Manipulation requires that those employing the technique have sufficient knowledge of the reactions of others that they can elicit the desired response by their own behavior.

There are also many cases where one or both partners comfortably conform to the relevant gender role stereotype and have so strongly internalized them that the kind of displacements suggested above do not occur. If both have done so, conflict is probably less but genuine sharing and two way communication help to reduce the misunderstanding. The masculine role has hardly prepared a male to enter a close, open relationship, nor would the power differential encourage it. Females are prompted to have babies because society has continually informed them that their primary function in life is motherhood. Males are under little such direct social pressures to become parents, excepts as it is exerted through their wives. Males seek women primarily in order to meet the one need that other men can not satisfy, paternity, which in most societies the ultimate claim to masculinity. It is not unusual for female to be informed more or less explicitly by male colleagues or fellow students that they have enough friends, what they want is a sexual partner, or nothing.

When they find family life becoming unpleasant, males look to other males even more for companionship, often developing a virtual woman-hating fraternity (Marger 178).

### **Sexuality and Gender inequality**

The relationship between sexuality and gender inequality has provoked wide discussion and controversy within feminism. Sexuality is variously affected by different factors, such as patriarchy (politically speaking), unequal position in the labor market and their domestic roles within the family, men's attempt to control women by means of sexual conduct ( radical feminists take sexuality to be at the heart of male domination ). On the other hand, women who stress on sexuality as a form of social control have also been criticized for neglecting its pleasure. Similarly, we must know that sexual relations both reflect and serve to maintain women's subordination and at the same time show how (women's) sex life is affected by gender inequalities.

There are so many questions. What is gender? How does it relate to anatomical sexual differences? How is it constructed and sustained in the life of an individual? What are the relationships between gender, sexuality, and individual identity or between heterosexuality, homosexuality and gender? Sex "refers to a biological fact of femaleness and maleness, to the fact that there are two forms of human species identifiable by a difference in reproductive physiology" where as gender "refers to the social roles and psychological identities and that we call 'feminine' and 'masculine', to that lived sense we have of what it means to be a woman or a man" (qtd in Campbell 126). Of course, women's experiences have been shaped by male centered value systems which define the female as static/ passive /natural in opposition to the male as dynamic/active and cultural. Gender, refers to a complex set of relations and process and to social constructs which are both both cultural and material. There is a complex configuration of the many traits of gender:

people's relation to their own sex and to the other sex and conflicts arising from such relations shape both the individual and the collective experience of women and men. Both the material and symbolic organization of gender relations constitute important points of structure and change in any society.

So, the study of gender relation has lately started and has even got distorted by ideological categories of the modern bourgeois, androcentric society which helped to maintain the hierarchy of power between women and men. So we need to develop an approach which recognizes the gender specific implications and sexist distortions in accepted ways of seeing and evaluating the world. Such approaches will enable us to make sense of our emotional knowledge about the human past as experienced by women /man in terms of both their differing specialists and their interdependence. It will be appropriate to quote Rohrbaugh here from Paula Nicolson's "Feminism and Academic Psychology: Towards Psychology of Women."

Gender is inescapable. It is probably the most important determinant of any individual's life experience. For the two sexes exist in different social worlds with widely divergent pressures rewards and expectations. In many areas of life there is no truly human experience.

There is only female experience and male experience. (Campbell, 60)

She quotes Sigmund Freud and Havelock Ellis to make clear how early sexologist claim female sexuality as essentially responsive, passive and seductive within a heterosexual frame work or how female sexuality is taken as male's object of desire. Nicolodon quotes Freud, "the accomplishment of the aim of biology has been entrusted to the aggressiveness of men and has been, to some extent, independent of women's consent (Campbell 73-74). And Ellis's following passage quoted by Nicololon further advocates women's sexual participation where she says "the true

nature of the passivity of the female is revealed by the ease with which it is thrown off, more especially when the male refuses to accept his cue”( Ellis 47).

Thus, for both Freud and Ellis, the active /passive role of man/woman heterosexual role ensured the continued existence of human sexual life. But what about women’s desires? Freud and the like sexologists either ignore or distort the knowledge of gender relations to suggest that female passivity in sexual behavior and professional life is at the root of female oppression. Is a passive role in heterosexual seduction, with intercourse as its aim, women’s preferred way to achieve sexual fulfillment?

Either based on biological discrimination or linguistic representation, they place phallus at the center. Women lack the phallus, or the center or the subject. So they are only objects which are the possession of the phallus. When they understand their ‘deformity’ they hate their mother or all women, and are attracted to father. On the other hand, man never shifts his primary love object–mother. He engenders this process with the help of phallus–the signifier of power. He manages his primary position threatening with the phallus.

In the late 1980s, the most developed form of feminism was *The Gender Theory* for the comparative study of sexual difference. French feminists projected the *writing the body*, in the eighties as a strong and revolutionary effort to provide authority to women’s writings. It is based on women’s genital and libidinal differences from men. Its most significant advantage is that it insists that all writings not just writings by women be gendered. It’s wider aspect is that the writings by men also can be feminist. And our perception of gender does not go far from feminist theory and gender relation as female relation is more. Feminist criticism as an analysis of gender opens the textual field in discourse. Gender theory promises to introduce the

subject of masculinity into feminist criticism. The distinction from traditional feminism is that, it tries to bring men as theorists, critics and scholars in to feminist criticism. The second aspect of gender study is that it brings feminist criticism from the margin to the center in to the literary analysis. Showlter's alarm is that if gender theory is defined within the framework of feminist concept, it can not result in important expansion of their work and rather lead to the displacement of depoliticization. For the betterment of gender theory, the continuous struggle against sexism and racism is needed everywhere.

### **The Patriarchy/power Debate**

Patriarchy which literally means 'rule by father' has been acutely debated. It is a system in which males systematically hold the balance of power and women are systematically subordinated to them. Patriarchy is usually studied to account for women's subordination in society and its important role in producing some indications of how gender inequality could be challenged and transformed. Sexuality and patriarchy, we cannot separate because sexuality is at the heart of male domination; it is seen as the primary means by which men control and maintain their power over women. Sexuality is also taken as a means of maintaining male power and control over women.

Originally, it is used to describe the power of the father as head of household, and the term 'patriarchy' has been used in the post 1960s feminism to refer to the systematic organization of male supremacy and female subordination. The term is identified with power and means for dominating others. Richardson and robinson quote Kate millet to make the term clear, "patriarchal government to be the institution where by that half of the populace which is female is controlled by that half which is

male, the principles of patriarchy appear to be fold ; male shall dominate female, elder male shall dominate younger (54).

Boys learn, as part of their socialization, that having sex with woman, particularly intercourse, is a central aspect of being masculine. So power and domination are central to the current construction of male sexuality. Sexuality is male's identity. On the other, female sexuality has been defined complementary to male's sexuality. Sex is supposed to be the dowry of men, men are naturally the 'dominant' or 'active' partner where as women are sexually 'submissive' or 'passive'. Sex is something men do to women. But if a woman takes the sexual initiative she is labeled as 'easy', 'unfeminine' or 'a nymphomaniac'.

Many sexologists stress men's desire to 'conquer' where women's desire is to 'Surrender'. Thus, this relationship between sex and power is assumed to be natural and normal. Similarly man's sexuality is taken to be so powerful that he cannot control, so women should not resist. This myth has been established in such a way that women provoke men by the way they dress, by leading men on and by saying 'no' when they really mean 'yes'. Thus we find sexuality as constructed in the interest of men and, consequently, it is defined largely in terms of male experience. Feminist researches have demonstrated that the majority of women do not have orgasm during vaginal intercourse (Richardson and Robinson 85). So the suppressed and denied sexuality must be challenged and women should discover their own experience. Man's sexual domination has prevented the emergence of women's self defined sexuality, so women have to achieve 'true sexual potential'. It will empower women giving them greater confidence and strength to oppose their subordination.

Heterosexuality is taken by many radical feminist as the most important institution of patriarchy (Richardson and Robinson 87). Heterosexuality is not an

individual preference but a socially constructed institution, and it structures and maintains male domination. Lesbianism has been defined as a challenge to the institution of heterosexuality and a form of resistance to patriarchy but Addrine Rich suggests that “heterosexuality may not be a preference at all, but something that has had to be imposed, managed, organized, propagandized and maintained by force’ (qtd in Richardson and Robinson 88). She gives some factors that argue women to have sexual relationships with men rather than with women, for example,

A sexual ideology which presents heterosexuality as normal and lesbianism as deviant; the unequal position of women in the labor market; the idealization of heterosexual romance and marriage; the threat of male violence which encourages women to seek the protection of man and men’s legitimizing of motherhood.(Richardson and Robinson 88)

Prostitution has a long history. A prostitute defines Gayut, is “any person for whom sexual relationships are subordinated to gain” (Ellis 152). In this sense whether civilization calls it immoral or not, women within their marital life are supposed to become wives in order to gain a home and livelihood. Abraham Flexner, in *Prostitution in Europe*, concludes that prostitution is “characterized by three elements variously combined: barter, promiscuity, emotional indifference”. Any person is a prostitution who habitually or intermittently has sexual relations more or less promiscuously for money or other mercenary considerations” (Ellis 152-53). But what about the sexuality of prostitution?

Most studies place economic necessity as the primary cause of prostitution. Some suppose prostitution is an industry and some say poverty engenders prostitution. But the question of sexuality is differently interpreted. For example, Morasso found

that “sexual impulse is one main cause inducing women to adopt prostitution, “while others assert that “prostitutes are usually most devoid of social impulse” (Ellis 172). “I have made inquiries of thousands of women on this point, and only a very small number have told me that were driven to prostitution for the satisfaction of sexual needs. . .” ( Ellis 173)

Yet the question of emotional appetite is equally important to some females who adopt prostitution to have emotional, sensual satisfaction. They think that they possess a kind of emotional strength that is necessary to be exposed in required situation. They think prostitution is not a mean of sexual victory of men over women rather a ground for women challenging vigorously and violently the sexual canon that supposes females lack something (phallus) and so lure to regain that by being deserving of sympathy them.

### Chapter III: Analysis of *Ravelstein*.

*Ravelstein*, studies in the light of Feminist perspective and shows the very nature and repercussions of the patriarchal system of the contemporary society and unequal woman man relationship. In his treatment of woman man relationship, we feel and observe the deeply ingrained assumption and ideals of patriarchy. The novel includes ideas about the nature of things, including unequal woman man relationship, humanity, masculinity and femininity. The novel unveils unseen vulnerability in the power of male consent. In it all characters show individual attitude in their way of thinking, social status and in woman man relationship.

Chick narrates the personal histories of different characters that he faced and happened in his life. He narrates different character's life in a reminiscent mood and recollects the events long after they have happened. In the beginning part of the novel, he narrates the story of Ravelstein, and his first wife Vela. His marital relation with his wife Vela and his growing affection with Abe Ravelstein is described. In the second part he describes the traumatic death of Abe Ravelstein because of AIDS. Similarly, he talks about his second marriage with younger wife Rosamund, a student of Abe Ravelstein.

“Marriage is a socially recognized and approved union between individuals, who commit to one another with the expectation of a stable and lasting intimate relationship” (Sajal 138). For Bellow all our social institutions are tremendous frauds which not only irritate him but also provide immense pleasure by their absurd pretences. He believes that all our social institutions like marriage, family and property are nuisances, our moral ideas immoral and emotions are unreal. He attacks the economic system of society in its greatest and most popular institutions marriage. “A marital relationship usually involves some kind of contract either written or

specified by tradition which defines the partners' rights and obligations to each other. Marriage depends on a sexual contract between woman and man and the economic dependent of the later" (Sajal 139). In this novel marriage is taken as means which destroys hope, binds the will and entangles the creations.

The author presents marriage as: "You don't like to think of such things, Chick, said Ravelstein and you're married to a woman who scares you. Of course you will say she's a political ignoramus" (Ravelstein 106). Vela understands very little about politics. She believes that a scientist is above and beyond such facts. Ravelstein tries to be superior by inferiorizing Vela. As Kristeva challenges "Lacanian symbolic order against the feminist ideology because it is centered around the phallus and the father (Seldon 153). Kristeva considered symbolic view of phallus as an inappropriate idea. "Marriage is commonly defined as a partnership between two members of opposite sex known as husband and wife includes living together, having sexual relations only with one another, sharing economic resources and being recognized the parents of their children" (Sajal 146) but in this novel, marriage is taken as great hindrance and obstacles. In marriage there is mutual cooperation, sharing of pain and pleasure but here marriage is considered as horror and terror.

In society women certainly desires to get married but shyness as much determining factor in the behavior as their desire for mating. Sex may be an impersonal instinct but in practice no woman and man want to make the ridiculous mistakes on it. The disjuncture between the realities of marriages and our ideals probably helps to account for the high divorce rates. At the same time patriarchal ideology is revealed through the following lines of the novels:

He did not admire me for doing such errands. He made this super clear.

The picture he had drawn of my marriage was any thing but flattering.

Writers don't make good husbands. They reserve their Eros for their art or maybe they just don't focus. As for Vela, he judged her even more severely. "Maybe I shouldn't have rushed in to the bedroom". He granted that, but added, "There was not all that much to be seen. Anyway, I was not interested. She was far from exposed. She had on her slip, and all her kinds of other stuff under that, so what's all the hue and cry?". (Bellow 112)

In addition to bring a personal relationship between two people, marriage is one of the society's most important and basic institutions. Marriage and family serve as tool for ensuring social productions. But, Ravelstein insists Chick to get rid of his relationship with his wife Vela. As described by Baron and Byron, "The manner in which the behavior, the feeling or thoughts of one individual are influenced by behaviors of others"(4). Here in the novel Ravelstein, Abe Ravelstein insists for disharmony. He imposes many presumption and prejudices to Chick because of which he can quit his relation with Vela. Ravelstein says, "Unless you have lived with her. You would not know what she does in the morning with her hair, her cheeks and her lips. She seems a beautiful women but it is beauty parade beauty" (Bellow 107). Here, Abe Ravelstein attempts to create hindrances and obstacles to quit the prevalent relationship between Chick and his wife Vela.

Sex is very real and sacred as if serves the purpose of life force but its free discussion in society is taboo, because it will be fatal to the institutions which respectable people hold dear. As described by Campbell, "For the two sexes exist in different social worlds with widely divergent pressures, rewards and expectations" (60). After a pause chick listens the dialogue uttered by Ravelstein.

“Ha! and by carrying a together does she mean what I think she means? After years of marriages? How long have you been married?”.

“Twelve whole years,” I told him “twelve! How pathetic”. Ravelstein said, “Like a prison terms you sentenced yourself too. You’re even a faithful husband .You served day after day with no time off for good behavior or applying for parole”. (Bellow 112)

These above lines also show the unequal relationship prevalent between Vela and Chick. He views the marital responsibilities and sacrifices of the loose life of a fashionable professional woman. Marriage brings life partners together and helps them to develop intense love and affection towards each other. It deepens the emotions and strengthens the companionship between the two. It also helps them to develop intellectual co-operation between them but in this novel marriage is taken as prison. Although they spent twelve years of conjugal life but there is no harmonious relationship.

Sentimentalism succeeds only by doing damage to what was also its most powerful equivocal resource, its faith in female consent, in the transformative ability of consent in marriage to make or unmake a new world. To clarify the unequal relationship Ravelstein tells, “Vela’s relationships with people, I had never heard of till now. He said he was ready to name my rivals but I wouldn’t listen. Since she did not love me I had, with innate biological resourcefulness, holed up behind my desk and finished a few long-post pone projects” (114). To hear about Vela’s alleged misconduct was destabilizing. Chick losses his footing, he stumbles when he remembers what Ravelstein tell him about Vela’s various affairs. Why were there so many conferences to attend in summer? Why Vela does not give phone number to Chick where she could be reached? Women and men within marriages have reflected

their roles with in society. As Jelhen writes, “the relationship of one person to another—individually, in groups, in crowds, in casual or intimate contacts” (458).

Laws and customs have traditionally restricted women’s opportunities, limited their legal rights and required them to be under the protection and control of man. When Vela does not say anything about venue and contact number of her conferences, the male suspects her activities. People speculate many things about her behavior and affairs.

Women are oppressed due to their sex based on dominant ideology of patriarchy. Patriarchy is the system which oppresses women through its social economic and political institutions. The male ideology used to define the women in their own way. “The society possessed the authority to introduce any female individual on the basis of its own measuring standard” (Rubin 168). Although Vela is competent and renowned professor of Physics, the society criticizes her activities. The novel further says:

She had original notions about walking, talking, shrugging, smiling. American acquaintances thought that she was the soul of European gracefulness and elegance. Rosamund herself thought so. But all the prestige, her reputation in her branch of physics, the fat salary she was paid, her inimitable toppling glamour were too hard for any women to compete with. Rosamund would say, “what an unusually beautiful women she is –waist, legs and everything”. (Bellow 120)

How the patriarchal ideology was reigning there in the Ravelstein can be realized through the above description of Vela. The above details about Vela reveal the way how male dominance has shaped the notions over female. Helene Cixous in *The Laugh of the Medusa* makes it clear as: “They have made for women as anti-

narcissism! A narcissism which loves itself only to be loved for what women haven't got! They have constructed the infamous logic of anti-love" (214). Women are supposed to be treated as irrational emotional and inferior. Many writers project women as either "other" or "victim". These sorts of characterization truly depict the nature of society and its context. To oppose the prevalent prejudices the following lines of Elaine Showalter explains "The women's movement initiated a feminist critic of a male culture and a female aesthetic celebration of women's culture" (177). Men and women are the by-product of the same society but a man is called cultured being where as a women is considered as uncultured one. Indeed, men have got the power of decision making by social favor whereas women are treated as "commodity" to be defined. It is a kind of realization of female identity in a male dominated society. Everywhere, the elaboration of the story justifies the influences of male ideology we can cite another example for the same purpose.

Because you would have murdered her eventually. He did not say this gloomily. To him the thought of such a murder was a good thing. It did me credit. "She had a sex-hex on you, so you had to be thinking of a violent death for her. She chose the worst moment possible, just after the death of both your brothers, to tell you she was filling for a divorce". (Bellow 128)

Patriarchal ideology defines women as passive sexual objects that do not deserve her own 'self'. She does not have true existence in society because she is a mere "commodity" to be used for manipulated. In the novel, when Vela files a case for divorce even the friends of Chick counsels him to murder her. These all evidences show the unequal relationship between Vela and Chick.

As Allport says, “Men must regard woman as equal, help emancipate them in home, so they can politically be equal” (15). But, patriarchal society considers women as objects rather than human beings with flesh and blood. Experiences and feelings of women are not valued. Men do not recognize even the male made convention if it contradicts their interests. Ravelstein a prominent professor talks about philosophical aspects of life. As Beauvior claims, “Women have been made inferior and the oppressions has been compounded by men’s belief” (Seldon 135). Ravelstein describes Rosamund :

He often spoke well of Rosamund. He said she was earnest hard working, had a good mind. She was a pretty and lively young woman. Young women, he said, were burdened by what he called “glamour maintenance”. Nature furthermore, gave them a longing for children and therefore for marriage, for the stability requisite for family life.

(Bellow 140)

Chick has fallen in love with a young woman ( Rosamund ) and married her. Chick marries the young student of Ravelstein. Although they have big gap in their age they marry. A reader can observe the way how easily a lady is motivated and abused. The experience of marriage becomes central to female sexual discovery, and often this proves to be traumatic. “This is not only because many young brides are unformed about sexual love, but also because it binds them to a relationship they cannot easily refute. A good husband will always regard his wife as his equal; treat her with kindness, respect and attention and never address her with an air of authority” (Campbell 74-75). In this novel, Abe Ravelstein plays the dualistic roles to disharmonize the relationship of Chick and Vela when he knew there was no recovery

possible from this disease, he held a impromptu seminars from his hospital bed.

Ravelstein describes Vela:

You gave in-you tried to sell me a colored cutout of the woman like the cardboard personalities they used to hang in movie lobbies in the old days. You know, Chick, you sometimes say there's nothing you can't tell me. But you falsified the image of your ex-wife. You'll say that it was done for the sake of marriage but what kind of morality is that?" (Bellow 176)

Somehow through the mixture of challenge and acceptance of change and continuity, woman men relationship evolved into new transformation. They often wound through ignorance and are surprised at having offended .What Chick does in response to Vela's behavior and to his own unsatisfied needs. Chick never expected his entire life to revolve around the marital relationship. Thus he is psychologically in a position to use both her behavior and needs as justification for various forms withdrawal. He withdraws affection from her, spends his time outside visiting friends, stays late at out. All of these can be forms of withdrawal from an unpleasant relationship. Ultimately Chick spends less and less time at home and more time with "the guys" or a succession of friends who understands him and his needs.

Another reaction Vela may have is to engage in never ending putdowns denigrating her mate's abilities and intellect and thus her right to belittle or even disagree with him. In turn, this behavior feeds back and exacerbates husband's nagging and whining. It is also not uncommon for her to react to her mate with various degrees of physical violence or threats of violence.

Through out the human history, woman individually as well as collectively has battled against the patriarchal structures for the courses of unequal social relations in society. Maria Mieds, feminist remarks, “feminist are those who dare to break the conspiracy of silence about the oppressive, unequal men women relationship and who want to change it”(74).

Due to the homosexual relationship, there is disharmony in the woman man relationship. In Ravelstein the harmonious relationship of Chick and Vela is disharmonized due to this homosexuality. Vela accuses Chick of his alleged misconduct. Vela knows the growing friendship of her husband Chick with Abe Ravelstein. Vela knows that Ravelstein is a gay. It is obvious that when a wife knows the growing relationship of her husband with gay then there come suspicion. She accuses her husband of his regular meeting with Ravelstein. Similarly, there is good friendship between Ravelstein and Chick. To promote their friendship Ravelstein initiates different pretensions to quit the prevalent relationship of Chick with his wife Vela. He gives false suggestion as well as evidences to create suspicion in Chick’s psyche. Day by day Ravelstein share the opinion with Chick against Vela and her activities. So, Vela suspects her husband and Chick also starts to suspect because of which their relationship is disharmonized.

Ravelstein begins with the word “odd”, it reflects on the amusing character of mankind. If this beginning is as advertised a “clever or wicked footnote” (Bellow 2), its clever wickedness surely must consists in making us think of Abe Ravelstein as example of this oddity. According to homosexual theory, male/female sexual desire was defined through a model of gender inversion. “In this conception, male inverts-men who desired other man–appropriated the female gender cultural mode, reflecting

the dominant belief that sexual being and gender role were inextricably linked (Kevin J. Mumford 387). The first sentence of the second part of the book seems to point to its unifying principle: “a certain amount of documentation might be offered at this point to show what I was to Ravelstein and Ravelstein to me” (Bellow 94) and a little later “we were close friends-what else needs to be added?”(94). Ravelstein is a man devoted to his friends and to the idea of friendship. Due to the homosexual relation there is disharmony in the family relationship. The family is the most important primary group in society. The family is a social group characterized by common residence, economic co-operation and reproduction. Second part of the book is filled with possible models for friendship: Chick and his wife Vela’s nominee for a replacement for Ravelstein, Radu Griescu. The fact was that I enjoyed watching Griescu. He had so many ‘tics’. Ravelstein and his lover Nikki “ in a special sense a family” (140).

In this regard, the text narrates a touching sentence “Nobody volunteered to talk to him about them. The one exception was Nikki. But Nikki was in a special sense, family. If Ravelstein had a family it would be an exotic one, because he had no one for families. Nikki, the handsome Chinese prince would inherit” (140-141). Ravelstein has homosexual relationship with Nikki so he does not need the family. Similarly, because of homosexual relationship, Vela suspects her husband Chick’s relations with Abe Ravelstein. Although Vela and Chick are wife and husband but they are staying as solitude. They don’t have good relations. As Keller and Schoenfeld say, "comprises the stimulation and reactions arising between an individual . . . and his fellows . . . Social psychology must not be placed in contradistinction to the psychology of the individual; it is part of the psychology of the individual” (qtd in Allport 352). Chick narrates, “Before I could consider whether

to agree or disagree he had already persuaded me. What he was suggesting was that I did not have to accept Vela's behavior. When we went to the country she locked herself up in the room. Two solitudes were then created (Bellow 103). It is one of Ravelstein's projects to divorce between Vela and Chick, who are always his "devoted protégés-from what used to be called their backgrounds" (104). He hated his own family and never tired of weaning his gifted students from their families.

Similarly, Ravelstein looms largest "He and I had become friends deeply attached and friendship would not have been possible if we hadn't spontaneously understood each other" (111). It is possible to provide preliminary theoretical answers to these group relations and cultural interaction. Male dominance is sexual. Meaning man in particular, if not men alone, sexualize hierarchy, gender is one. "As much a sexual theory of gender as a gendered theory of sex, this is the theory of sexuality that has grown out of consciousness raising in the women's movement" (Catharine A Mackinnon 438). The meaning of practices of sexual violence can not be categorized away as violence, not sex either.

The male role centers on aggressive intrusion on those with less power. This mutual understanding presupposes certain frankness: "You couldn't, as the intimate and friend of Ravelstein, avoid knowing a great deal more than you had an appetite for" (Bellow 113), but not confidentiality, for Ravelstein was crazy about gossip and his friends were given points for the racy items they brought. And it was not a good idea to assume that he would keep the lid on your confidences" (114). The principle of the friendship then is the naked truth (115); nothing is to be off limits. As in social psychology which Baron and Byrne write "is the scientific field that seeks to investigate the manner in which the behavior, feelings or thoughts of one individual are influenced or determined by the behavior and / or characteristics of others" (qtd

in Allport 4). Chick characterizes this complete openness in an odd way, "It was our sense of what was funny that brought us together, but that would have been a thin anemic way to put it. A joyful noise--*immenso giubilo*--an outsize joint agreement picked us up together and it would get you nowhere to try to formulate it" (Bellow 118).

The friendship between Chick and Ravelstein is a sort of marriage. Vela actually accuses Chick of having an affair with Ravelstein (112), and Chick tacitly compares the two by indicating that whereas he and Ravelstein share the sense that everything is potentially funny, Vela finds nothing funny and laughs only when it is conventionally expected (218). The two are as one in their sense that nothing is too sacred to be looked at and that most of what is held sacred is wonderfully absurd. "As a rule [they spoke] plainly to each other" (125). Ravelstein, for example, is openly critical of Chick's marriage to Vela and of his association with the Grielescus. It includes adults of both sexes, at least two of who maintain socially approved sexual relationships and one or more children, own or adopted, or of the sexually co-habiting adults. Due to the homosexual relationship, there is no good relationship. There is no good relation between woman and man in a family. A socially approved relationship and various rights and obligations are disharmonized.

Because death means "the pictures will stop" and so life is the pictures the surface of things in which one sees the heart of things (156) the single thing to be held sacred is fidelity to the true character of the pictures. What Ravelstein so loved in Herbst's late wife Nehamah "That she was pure and she was immovable" is a version of what he loves in Chick. That Chick does not make convenient concessions to the conventional his thought even when it is hard on others and on

himself. That's why Ravelstein enlists him to write him up after he dies: "I want you to show me as you see me, without softeners or sweeteners" (133).

All these details about homosexual relationship ultimately results for the ruin of family life as well as personal life of characters. Because of this homosexuality Ravelstein is dying of AIDS: AIDS as the worst consequence of certain kind of association. Homosexuality caused the miserable death of the renowned professor Abe Ravelstein.

Bellow's heroes promote with such amazing eloquence. Ravelstein's increasingly dying body poor Ravelstein, "Chick says in an unguarded awkward moment, "destroyed by his reckless sex habits". The interactive processes involve alterations in both man and his environment as they impinge upon each other. Changes in man's knowledge of, beliefs about and feelings as these continue to shape his relationship to his world.

Bellow opines that prostitution, adultery, lesbian and gay relations are caused by the social system in which the poverty arising from underpaid labor or enforced unemployment leads women/man to sell their affections and sexual services. It results not from female depravity and licentiousness, but simply from underpaying, undervaluing and overworking women. Men and women are situated in society not only differently but also unequally. Women get less of the material resources, social status, power and opportunities for self actualization than do men.

Bellow is immensely interested in the economic factors of social absurdities .The book says:

Nothing had been disturbed. Maintaining the apartment were two ladies-the Polish women Wadja, who did the real cleaning on Tuesdays, and black Mrs. Ruby Tyson (far too old for real work), who

let herself in on Fridays. Mrs Tyson's function was to keep up the dignity of the households where she worked. (91)

From these lines we come to know that due to the poverty and depravity, women are working even if they are very old. Mrs. Ruby is very old for real work but she has to work to sustain her life. In her old age also she is struggling for the sake of dignity and independent status. But, Ravelstein shouts and controls her with loud cry. There is no good relationship between Ravelstein and Wadja. In the Patriarchal society, women especially those who are economically weak and whose status are low, are accused of being evil and witch. The women who do not have support are hated and imposed various blames. The text describes:

As nearly regarding the problems of Ruby took into account her problems with her prostitute daughter, her jailed criminal son and with the other son whose HIV troubles and scrambled wives and children were too complicated to describe. (92-93)

Ravelstein sometimes listens sympathetic stories of Ruby but he does not show any interest and sympathy on her miserable condition. A prostitute defines Gayut, is "any person for whom sexual relationships are subordinated to gain" (Ellis 152). In this sense whether civilization calls it immoral or not, women within their marital life are supposed to become wives in order to gain a home and livelihood. Due to the poverty, her condition is very traumatic but the old women presented her as quiet, dignified and reserved. Ravelstein listens the chaos life of such people but does not show any concern with her problem. Even if he does not pay any attention, to survive in this world, the old women made beds for such academic bureaucrats and dust his parlor. She tells their family problems, the esoteric, psychiatric secretes of their lives. But, Abe Ravelstein does not show any humanistic behaviors. He does not want to show

any human relation with her. Ruby represents her as the confident and capable women even if the conditions are adverse.

These all events clarify the poor economic conditions of the female. They are compelled to do lower graded work. The text describes about her: Ravelstein greeted her with a lifted finger saying to Nikki, “for God’s sake, keep her away from the Lalique”. Wadja becomes furious and swishes the wine glasses under the tap. She chips them on the faucet. Ravelstein sees the damage. She starts to weep. She says she will buy new glasses from Woolworth when she hears the glasses cost, she grins. At that moment Ravelstein utters “You can’t help thinking these women are just as rough with men’s penises. Just imagine—if they were glass” (Bellow 78).

According to the feminist, the primary feminist role model is that where in the suppressed and thwarted women still dares to question the status quos and in quiet unobtrusive ways asserts their individuality. Ruby and Wadja belong this variety. Their existence is thwarted by the irrational forces of nature and of commercialism. Their lives questions are thus reduced to the eternal quest for freedom in the face of tyranny of many kinds.

From above line we clearly see the unequal relationship among women and men. While washing the dishes, she breaks the wine glasses but Ravelstein becomes furious and aggressive. He accuses women as bad and wicked. He compares women with “men’s penises”. The superiority complex of male creates the hindrances on the progress of the female. They generalize women as wicked and compared them with glasses. These all evidences show the unequal and inhuman relationship prevalent in the contemporary society. Wadja and Ruby has to do with the socio-domestic framework of women/man relationship. The activities and events are totally domestic, there is scrubbing the floors, cleaning the boots, run the vacuums, flushing the toilets.

It has the drudgery of domestic work and ordinary humdrum of poor women's life.

Fulfillment of the economic necessities is always significant for the characters.

*Ravelstein* thus incorporates unfulfilling and unequal woman man relationship.

The characters hatred for one another separate their relationship. The hatred and misunderstand they have in one another is tested severely by the separation they faced. The traditional matrimonial bond between Vela and Chick rest severely on misunderstand hatred and unfaith. Thus family and society can not run smoothly when there is unequal and disharmonious relationship between woman and man.

#### IV: Conclusion

This study of *Ravelstein* shows that the emotional bond between woman and man is characterized by disharmony and unfulfillment. Saul Bellow fuses his female characters with a sense of rebelliousness, and focuses the attainment of equal rights and opportunities for women in all areas of social and economic life. Bellow's this novel shows the set of beliefs and actions that center on the inequality of woman and man relationships in various areas of social life.

Woman man relation is essential that without this relationship there can be no evolution in this universe. Gender relations focus only upon female and male because they play vital roles. There are responsibilities and expectations of woman and man in societies and culture. These are important element in the quest for happiness. Gender relationship suggests that the coming together makes the two with each sex complete. One of the important features of this novel is the study of power relations between woman and man in society, how this power relation is institutionalized and practiced in every day life from family to state and interstate relationships to reproduce, to maintain and change the hierarchical and unequal gender relationship are basic focus of this novel.

A deep understanding, loving concern, practical wisdom and rebellious nature are some of the major qualities of the characters in the novel. Vela and Chick do not achieve the cherished goal of fulfilling relationship. They come across different phases of misunderstanding or withdrawal of love but the consequent and basic emotion of love does not remove all bitterness from their lives. Despite her capabilities, her husband Chick doesn't pay any attention on their relationship. Ultimately Vela and Chick divorce and Chick marries a young student of Abe Ravelstein, Rosamund. Vela and Chick do not display heroic dimension by accepting

life with its sordidness and limitations. They do not make compromise with their circumstances. The feminine instinctive nature has been looted and driven back over time. For several years it was relegated to the poorest land in the psyche and women were considered as passive and meant to fulfill male desires. Even, many women were trying to come out for their freedom, identity and independent status. Women are seen as deeply sensitive and experienced in adapting to constantly changing circumstances as Vela, Wadja and Mrs. Ruby. They are also fiercely brave about taking any step. They have certain psyche, characteristics such as a keen sense, playful spirit and heightened capacity for devotion. They are inquisitive and possess great endurance and strength.

In patriarchal society, for the years women have lived under the protection of their parents or husband or their sons. This pattern of life outwardly makes women's lives safe and smooth, but actually slavish and dependent on men. Now along with various other factors, the new education has awakened women. They have started thinking of independent and self reliant life. And in order to translate this thinking into reality, they have started fighting against man who has traditionally been regarded as a protector, a master, a guardian of women. But because of the growing awareness, women would not approve this asymmetrical relation anymore. Thus here lies the cause of suffering. The old patriarchal cultural ties compel woman to accept to be treated as a child, while the realization of her new identity instigates her to liberate herself from ages old guardianship. Definitely the agony and rage simultaneously spring. Women have realized that they are not as helpless and dependent as a child. They are as much competent as man. But immediately, the old patriarchal pattern begins to over power them. The old tradition of patriarchal domination shakes their

new faith. They feel obliged to struggle to break the old mansion of patriarchal authority.

However while fighting against the established old system, women initiate different methods and strategies to liberate them. But the patriarchy always dominates them, their rebel confronts a sense of failure and they suffer continuously. In this regard many writers view that harmonious relationship between woman and man can only be achieved through mutual understanding and love. The novel portrays the unequal woman relationship and disharmony in society because of patriarchal authority.

To sum up, Saul Bellow as a novelist has given primary importance to women and their relationship with men. His novel exposes evidence of his awareness of the condition of women in which women are bound to suffer. Due to the homosexuality, economic deprivation, the relation between woman and man is disharmonized. In this sense, Bellow targets to reform of societal institutions that continue to discriminate against women. Strong emphasis is placed on the recognition of and dissatisfaction with the fact that men create rules that woman must live by because of which the relationship between woman-man is not harmonious. The male ideology has hindered and prevented women from realizing the women's productive and creative possibilities.

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