

**TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY**

**Psychological Dilemma in Philip Roth's *Portnoy's Complaint***

**A Thesis Submitted to the Central Department of English  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Masters of Arts in English**

**By**

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**Letter of Recommendation**

Raju Sharma has completed his thesis entitled “Psychological Dilemma in Philip Roth’s *Portnoy’s Complaint*” under my supervision. He carried out his research from 2065/08/29 to 2066/02/20. I hereby recommend that his thesis be submitted for viva voce.

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**Approval Letter**

This thesis entitled “Psychological Dilemma in Philip Roth’s *Portnoy’s Complaint*” submitted at the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University by Raju Sharma, has been approved by the undersigned members of the research committee.

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## **Abstract**

The present research work is a critical study of Philip Roth's *Portnoy's Complaint* from the perspective of repressive neuro-psychoanalysis. This research paper attempts to delineate the ambivalent stance of Alex Portnoy, an emotionally and psychologically disturbed character, repressed under domineering mother. Alex, a narrator reared in strict household, suffers from feeling of unfulfilled sex, obsession and anxiety. Duty of being a Jew and his desires constantly collide each other. Although he attempts to despise morality electing himself to liberate through sex; sexuality cannot heal his psychological state of dilemma. This makes him a depressed character.

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## I. Introduction

Philip Roth's *Portnoy's Complaint* was first published in 1969. Alexander Portnoy, the central character of the novel delivers this monologue. He is a Jewish boy who lived most of his childhood in the Newark Jewish neighborhood New Jersey. He was a brilliant student admired by his parents. But Portnoy from his childhood on has been obsessed by women and sexuality. The clash between secret thoughts and the morals of his Jewish education is too violent. Soon desire to become potent and Jewish family values cause dilemma.

Roth's the *Portnoy's Complaint* is the story about Alexander Portnoy with big nose and big ego who loves sex. As he was brought up in an extremely strict household with high expectations and, has strongly conflicting feelings regarding the world of sex. Portnoy has a strong sex drive, and though there is nothing more that he wishes for. He loves kinky sex but feels guilty doing it, and relates these problems through several anecdotes regarding his early childhood and teenage years, hoping to help the doctor reach a conclusion about his problem.

*Portnoy's Complaint*, Roth's third novel, marked a turning point in the author's career. The inspiration behind Portnoy has been variously attributed to Lenny Bruce's nightclub act. Roth records the intimate confessions of Alexander Portnoy his psychiatrist. Portnoy goes through his adolescent obsession with masturbation and his relationship with his over possessive mother, Sophie:

Then came adolescence-half my waking life spent locked behind the bathroom door, firing my wad down the toilet bowl or into the soiled clothes in the laundry hamper, or splat, up against the medicine chest

mirror, before which I stood in my dropped drawers so I could see how it looked coming out. (17)

Portnoy's approach to hedonistic western culture is ironic. Jewishness has been Roth's major territory in his examination of the American culture. From Malamud and Bellow, his older colleagues, Roth has differed in more ironic-sometimes characterized as:

less loving-view of the Jews. Often the readers has identified the writer himself with the obsessions of his fictional characters, and accused him of sharing their thoughts. In one of the interviews, Roth has said, "Publishing a book is like taking a suitcase and putting it out in a public place and walking away and leaving it there. (47)

Roth's heroes are psychologically disturbed character who seek salvation, form their traumatic experience. Alexander Portnoy suffers dilemma in Portnoy's complaint. Despite he struggles to come out from his state of dilemma and to liberate himself, his experience as a Jew and his wishes clash throughout his life. The heroes have to hide their feelings. In partisan Review, Mark Shechner says, "the early books [. . .] with their repressed and driver characters who repress desires that, as we might expect, refuse to go away and keep returning in the form of compulsive and irrational behaviour" (234).

In the novel, the central character who Roth has made narrator, lives under strict environment of his household where his 'self' and desire has not been counted. He has to live in fear, i.e. the fear of his mother and the fear of going against his religion in its real sense. However, he despises its prevalent orthodoxy and blind faith. As a result, he cannot act consciously and his disgusting attitudes which Freud termed



'slips of tongue', appears. The taboo he uses are his disgusting feelings for all norms and values that are blindly followed.

Repressed characters are sure to become a neurotic patient. Repression of childhood days brings someone to the state of neurosis. Conflict of his earlier days brings him to the verge of inability. Conflict is common in Roth's novel.

The major conflict that Portnoy endures and that Roth suggests characterizes many young Jewish American men of his generation is described in the preliminary matter to the novel, where *Portnoy's Complaint* is given a dictionary definition. Portnoy cannot shake off his Jewish ethical heritage for a life of restrained libidinous satisfaction. In Freudian terms he is the victim of an unrelenting battle between the reality principle and the pleasure principle, the alter ego and the id, in which his poor ego emerges immorally battered and bewildered.

In *Portnoy's Complaint*, Roth depicts a story that is told by Alex Portnoy, a Jewish boy, a brilliant student admired by his parents. But Portnoy undergoes repression of his libidinal desire. It does not get outlet, and, in fact he embodies sex as the means to get away from his outer reality. His father is passive, suffers constipation and remains silent. His mother has always become an oppressor and all his activities are controlled by her.

As he reaches adolescence he becomes obsessed character with chronic masturbation as a way to forget reality. His repressed impulses appear as a dream and more and more he enjoys fantasy that gives him solace from his surrounding atmosphere of dominance, mother and Jewish morals and values. Portnoy's voice is suppressed and unheard. Zaid Mahir says, "Roth makes a powerful statement on what it means to be a sensitive human being caught up in the middle of exercise discourse that thrives on continuity of tradition and suppression of individual voice" (3).

Portnoy is anxious of his mother even if reaches adolescence. Neurosis attributes to the frustration, infantile sexual drives, and Alex Portnoy indulges in self eroticism, yet he fears his reality to be being discovered. So his reality principle and pleasure principle constantly struggles. The psychological or mental disorder caused by fear and anxiety bring Alex to the abyss of the neurotic world.

In his thirties, he visits his parents once a week as he is away from his family, but still they nag him with their worries. Alex escaped his home and family values but the escapement is a complex process which he has been searching for a long time. In its real sense his tradition has dominated him so much so that he cannot be away from it. His dilemma lets him no outlet and no solution, and thus his consciousness is shadowed because of confusion, inability to choose and compulsive obsessive behavior that are characteristics of neurosis. Throughout the novel, Alex tries to come out of his state of dilemma. He takes sex as liberating force, but his attempt of liberation is futile and the novel ends with the guilt without sex.

For Roth, the introversions of contemporary fiction reflect a wide social dilemma: "Defying a multitude of bizarre projections, submitting to them" he has said, "would seem to me at the heart of everyday living in American." Adapting Philip Roth's divisions of American writer into "redskins" and "pale faces" - the one rambustious and anarchies, the other stiff and priggishness has proposed his own third category, a subversive synthesis of the two: the redface." Roth's is the poetry of embarrassment and exposure; by making unease theme and narrative technique, he has fused play and seriousness into a style inimitably his own, which is not easily rendered "speechless".

Roth expresses the terror of existence of the 20<sup>th</sup> century American Jews in his fiction. Regarding Roth's writing Ann asserts that he, "writes from the perspective of

minority culture in United States" (1606), who are the part of American culture. They share their living with the complexity of American society. In such situation they feel alienated, unsecured and displaced.

Anxiety, assimilation, disturbed mentality and anti-Semitism characterized the twentieth century American Jewish experience. Moreover, victimization and suffering became central to American Jewish society. Roth's novels justifies that Jewishness is the cause of intense suffering of Jews and they are grounded in the Jewish life.

Roth satirizes a number of Jews so sharply that they almost become caricatures, not because they are Jews, not even because they have become assimilated, but because in the process of assimilation they have allowed themselves to lust or material well being or egotistic advantage. Roth, while deploring this state of affairs still affirms in some characters the existence of a moral strength which he sees as admirable. Marx recovers his integrity, Eli reject the pseudo values of his suburban milieu, Ozzie teachers the community a lesson and Neil Klugman return to his library.

Roth's characters feel cramped in by the patterns which they or modern life, or both, stand on all sides, sometimes with tragic result-abortion and death, near-madness, impotence, despair, the insidious destructiveness of marriage. Characters in *Letting Go*, Paul and Libby Herz, Martha Reaganhart, and Gabe Wallach are psychologically cytological crippled, or imagine themselves to be their fanatic efforts. In Roth's fictions, characters try to escape the vise of their past of their neurotic limitations, yet the hope for relief do not bring result. The Jewish faith and the strict and blind application of its rule are shown to operate as a frustrating and non liberating factor.

Roth's hero is problematic in choosing reality of his Jewish background, family values and desire to live a secular and liberal way of life. Because of his ambivalent position he swings between his Jewish family values to be a dutiful son and his desire to enjoy life to the utmost as a fully assimilated American Jew. Neither can he get far away from his belongingness, nor fulfill his desire by forgetting the former one. This is the main cause of his dilemma that affected him psychologically.

*Portnoy's Complaint* explores the theme of conflict between morality and desire of an individual. This conflict has a psychological impact upon the character that perpetually tortures him. As his feelings are deprived under the name of religion and morality, the hero tries to get freedom from all the bondages that remain influential factor in repressing the desire of Alex. To struggle is to struggle against all the prevalent systems that impose norms and values without caring individuality and his identity.

Alex rebellion begins since his youth, yet the rebellion becomes so personal that he cannot expose it to others. In spite of restriction, he becomes obsessive of self-eroticism and dreams of extreme bliss. Although he enjoys his desire unconsciously, he tries to find his identity in his own community of Jewishness. In the process of liberation he searches his identity of Jews among his girlfriend. That is to say, he rejects Jews and accepts it giving continuity to his wishes. This makes him a complex character of dual mind who cannot leave his self of being a Jew and his unconscious desire. Thus, he is a character of dilemma whose suffering evidently pushed him to the psychological state of neurosis.

Roth's hero, a neurotic patient suffers dilemma in *Portnoy's Complaint*, yet he tries to escape it through sex and sexuality. He needs salvation from his traumatic world of irritation and confusion. His rationality to think consciously has already been

overpowered by his unconscious desire, leaving him an impotent man which he discovers in Israel. Alex needs liberation but it is restrained by the dilemma and the confusing state.

Some critics focus on the cultural aspect of this novel, devoid of psychological dilemma. Charles M. Israel points out that Alex is one of the pervasive characteristics of life in the twentieth century is a constant crisis in authority that informs so much of contemporary literature, perhaps because "Not animal world, not the plant world, not the miracle of the spheres, but man himself is now the crucial mystery" (4).

Portnoy's Complaint has been interpreted by various other critics. John Blitzer views this novel as having been illustrated, "the nexus of hate and culture played out in an individual who hates himself and his people for the incompatibility between cultural identity and a more mainstream American identity" (139).

Alex's attempt to liberate fails when he discovers his impotence. Proving my research work I would like to posit Dan Calson's view:

[. . .] Alexander Portnoy sought liberation not from his dirty little mind, but rather through his sexual adventures. Alex attempts to liberate not only himself but also those Jewish youths who share his oppressive childhood, as well as a society still shackled by swiftly decaying but pervasive ideas of appropriate thought and behaviour. He cannot liberate himself through sexual difference, no matter how depraved his actions may be by the cultural standards of the 1960s.

(131)

Portnoy's Complaint was published in the midst of the sexual revolution, and it appears that its author intended to free Alex from the psychological state by imbuing

him with a sexually experimental nature by giving his voice and audience to share and solidify his break with his family's norms.

In this dissertation, the novel will be viewed as the futile attempt of liberation from his traumatic world because of his psychological state of dilemma, a disturbed mentality of neurosis, symptoms repression and obsession. So, the proteins of the novel will be proposed and analyzed as a neurotic and repressive character who being unable to revolt undergoes repressive psychic world of dilemma. And this issue is completely different from other's interpretation.

My primary source in this dissertation will be the text itself. As secondary sources, I will study the available critical writings both on the author and the text. Though I will not be deriving any larger frameworks or models from theory, I will surely dwell on some of them in order to incorporate my ideas in a more innovative way. I will take ideas from Freud, Horney and others to justify the hypothesis and make the dissertation more illuminating and rewarding. I will make attempts to explore a complex cluster of deviant behaviour: repression, obsession, fantasy, etc. Further I will throw light on the inability and emotional sterility of Alex. I will view Alex's futile attempt of liberation and the consequences it invites. I have presented their introduction of important tools in brief which I will deal in detail in theory section.

This study is divided into four different chapters. The first chapter will be a general introduction to the study. Theories dealing with factors of mental disturbance on the basis of psychoanalysis especially of Sigmund Freud will be dealt in the second chapter. The third chapter will be a textual analysis of the novel. In the fourth chapter, conclusion will try to sum up the analysis done in earlier chapters. All the chapters

will attempt to revolve around the problematic issue of neurosis and repression as the casual factors to hinder liberation.

## **II. Repressive Neuro-psychoanalysis**

Psychoanalysis is a procedure for the treatment of mental and emotional disturbances. Sigmund Freud originated and developed psychoanalysis as a result of his individual resources into the cause of hysteria, one of the common forms of mental illness in Europe in the latter part of the nineteenth century.

The unique characteristic of psychoanalysis as a therapy derives from its theory of psychopathology. The central finding of psychoanalysis is that mental and emotional disturbances result from unconscious mental life. Treatment therefore depend upon the ability of the patient, with the help of the analyst, to reveal unconscious thoughts and feelings.

According to Freud's first conception of symptom formation. Morbid thought patterns occurred during a dissociated state and were prevented from normal discharge because of the altered state of consciousness. The undischarged tensions produced symptoms. The cure required some method of discharge an abreaction or mental catharsis. By applying hypnosis, the noxious material could be brought to the surface and discharged through verbal association. Joseph Breut described his clinical experience in treating a female patient he named Anna O, was dependent upon a quantitative hypothesis concerning unconscious mental life and its relation to conscious states.

Freud's first theory to explain hysterical symptoms was the so-called "seduction theory." Since his patients under treatment with his new method remembered incidents of having been sexually seduced in childhood Freud believed that they had actually been abused only to later repress those memories. This led to the publication with Dr. Breur in 1893 of case reports of the treatment of hysteria.



Freud published three essays on the theory of sexuality in which he laid out his discovery of the so-called psychosexual phases: oral (ages 0-2), anal (2-4), phallic oedipal (1<sup>st</sup> genital), latency (6-puberty) and mature genital (puberty onward). His early formulation included the idea that because of societal restrictions sexual wishes were repressed into an unconscious state, and that the energy of these unconscious wishes could be turned into anxiety or physical symptoms.

Since Freud was a biological scientist, he believed that human has gained where in his psychogenetic history, certain innate unlearned strivings or instincts. These urges are modified by life experiences of the individual, but in their essence they remain biologically determined. Since these urges a biological nature underlie all that an individual does and thinks about, biological and psychological developments are inseparably interconnected. The modification in the force and direction of the instinctual urges are brought about in a social environment. Freud, thus, considers, all behaviors conditioned socio-psycho-biologically. Roughly speaking, tripartite personality structure-super-ego, ego and id are representatives of societal, psychological and biological constitutions respectively

Freud recognizes two fundamental motivating forces: the constructive 'life urges' and the 'death urges'. Drawing upon Greek mythology, he christened the life forces 'Eros' and the death force 'thantos'. The life instincts serve the purpose of individual survival and racial propagation. Hunger, thirst and sex fall in this category. The form of energy by which the life instincts perform their work is called 'libido'. The sex instinct is not one but many. That is, there are a number of separate bodily needs that give rise to erotic wishes. Each of these wishes has its source in a different bodily region referred to collectively as 'erogenous zones'. Death instincts, on the other hand, perform much less conspicuously than the life instincts, and for this

reason little is known about them. An importable derivative of death instincts is the aggressive drive. A person fights with himself and with other consciously or unconsciously owing to his urge to destroy himself or others. The aim of the death urges is to injure, destroy and kill. To be specific, the goal of life is according to Freud, death.

So far as we know, life and death instincts are separate having opposite goals, however, this assumption can be questioned, as Sullivan writes:

the life and death instincts and their derivatives may fuse together, neutralize each other or replace one another. Eating, for example, represent a fusion of hunger and destructiveness [. . .] love, a derivative of the sex instinct, can neutralize hate, a derivatives of the death instinct. Or love can replace hate and hate love. (Sullivan, 43)

The life drives or impulse are further divided into two groups: the 'ego drives' that subserve the organic needs of nutrition and self-preservation, and the 'sex-drives' that find expression in pleasurable and affectional pursuits. Ego drive plays an insignificant role in Freudian psychoanalysis and the major importance is attached to the sex and aggression drives. These two impulses are not enemy, but compatible and coexisting. The fusion or the conflicting coexistence of these two drives are termed as ambivalence in psychoanalysis.

Another important aspect of psychoanalysis lies in its abstract division of mind into three levels: the 'conscious', the 'preconscious' and the 'unconscious'. State of mental events and memories related with immediate awareness is called conscious. According to Freud, it occupies a scant telling space in mental processes, Similarly, that dimension of mind where readily recallable memories reside is called preconscious. It is known as storehouse of memorized events and desires that may

come in consciousness. The unconscious consists material that we can not recall at our will. It is repository of buried thoughts and impulses. Freud claims that our mental processes are essentially unconscious.

Freudian psychoanalysis, thus, can evidently be described as the theory of human mind that deals with the dynamics of human behaviour. Moreover, theories are directly or indirectly related with the nature of unconscious mind. It suggests that the powers that motivates individuals are mainly unconscious. Because I am concerned with the theoretical aspects of psychoanalysis. I will leave the therapeutic aspect. The aim here is to study futile attempt of protagonists liberation from his dilemma in Philip Roth's. The protagonists complaint in terms of Freudian psychoanalysis. To widen the understanding and support my research I have included ideas particularly on neurosis form Karen Horney and repression, an influential Freudian psychoanalyst. I have brought ideas form both these critics to analyze the protagonist's state of dilemma and futile attempts of liberation which he searches from his dual world. The textual analysis of the thesis implicitly intends into two parts- the first one proves the protagonist's situation of repression and undergoing neurosis; the second part deals with the futility of liberation form his neurotic need.

Freud's another theory occurred in 1923 when he presented his new "Structural theory" of id, Ego and superego in a book entitled, *The Ego and the Id*. Therein, he revised the whole theory of mental functioning, considering that repression was only one of many defense mechanisms, and that it occurred to reduce anxiety. Freud laid out how intrapsychic conflict among drive and superego (Wishes and guilt) caused anxiety, and how that anxiety could lead to an inhibition of mental functions, such as intellect and speech. (Starchy, J. 58).

The Id comprises the unorganized part of the personality structure that contains the basic drives. The Id is unconscious by definition. In Freud's formulation:

It is the dark, inaccessible part of our personality, what little we know of it we have learnt from our study of the dream-work and of the construction of neurotic symptoms and most of this is of a negative character and can be described only as a cauldron full of seething excitations [ . . . ] It is filled with energy reaching if from a striving to bring about the satisfaction of the instinctual needs subject to observance of the pleasure principle. (Freud 28)

The Id is the instinctual, hereditary part of the psyche. In developing this concept, Freud extended the idea of the unconscious to include not only that which is repressed but also the biological basis of personality. The Id is the repository of sexual drive or libido and of the destructive power of the death instinct. It follows only the pleasure principle without regard for reality or logic. Gratification may come through fantasy and urges may be displaced on to other objects. (30)

The ego comprises the organized part of the personality structure which includes defensive, perceptual, intellectual-cognitive, and executive functions. Conscious awareness resides in the ego, although not all of the operations of the ego are conscious. In Freud's theory, the ego mediates among the Id, the super-ego and the external world. Its task is to find a balance between primitive drives and reality while satisfying the Id and super-ego. Its main concern is with the individual's safety and allows some of the Id's desires to be expressed, but only when consequences of these actions are marginal. Freud had used an analogy which likened the ego to a rider and a horse; the ego being the rider while the Id being the horse. The horse provides

the energy and the means of obtaining the energy and information need, while the rider ultimately controls the direction. It wants to go.

Super ego is a part of the personality structure, mainly but not entirely unconscious, that includes the individual's ego ideals, spiritual goals and the psychic agency that criticizes and prohibits his or her desires, fantasies, feeling and actions. Freud's theory implies that the super-ego is a symbolic internalization of the father figure and cultural regulations. The superego tends to stand in opposition to the desires of the Id because of their conflicting objectives, and its aggressiveness towards the ego (Starchy, J 228).

Also known as psychoneurosis or neurotic disorder, neurosis is a term that refers to any mental imbalance with no apparent organic cause. It represents a variety of psychiatric conditions in which emotional distress or unconscious conflict is expressed through various physical, psychological and mental disturbances, which may include physical symptoms e.g. hysteria. The defensive symptom is anxieties. Neurotic tendencies are common and may manifest themselves as depression, acute or chronic anxiety, obsessive-compulsive tendencies, phobias and even personality disorders. It connotes a disorder or disease, but in general, neurosis is a normal human experience, part of human condition. A psychological problem develops when neurosis begin to interfere with, but not significantly impair, normal functioning and thus cause the individual anxiety.

Freud believes that the casual factors behind it can be found roughly in first six years of life, when the personality is weak. He attributes neurosis to the frustration of infantile sexual drives. Severe eating, toilet habits or self-eroticism and other restrictions become taboos and are imposed. These infantile conflicts, remaining

unresolved, appear in adulthood under conditions of stress as neurotic symptoms.

Hendric summarized Freud's explanation of the origin of neurosis:

Freud discovered that all factors contributing to a neurotic reactions are mainly associated with the sexual life of the patient, and the sexual life of his childhood as well as adulthood. In addition, Freud has always recognized hereditary as one of the etiological factors [ . . . ] but it is also apparent that individuals whose heredity and infantile experience are not unusually unfavorable may be made neurotic by exceptional emotional strain. (27)

Therefore, for Freud, neurosis is the result of repression of sexuality that continues even in adulthood.

Freud's modality of classification is mainly based on two categories, 'actual neurosis' and 'psychoneurosis'. The actual neurosis includes neurasthenia and anxiety neurosis. Psychoneurosis includes conversion, hysteria, anxiety hysteria and obsessive-compulsive neurosis. Generally neurosis in psychoanalysis consists as anxiety neurosis, hysteria and obsession neurosis.

Anxiety neurosis is commonly found in most individuals, so it is common form of psychoneurosis. Rose says "it is a series of symptoms, which arise form faulty adaptations to the stress and strains of life. It is caused by over action in a attempt to meet these difficulties" (11). Some of the symptoms of anxiety neurosis are tension, feelings of insecurity, restlessness, insomnia, palpitation, excessive sweating, dizziness, etc. Anxiety may appear because of continuous frustration and conflicting situations. Unlike neurotic patients, the normal individual realizes the anxiety and tries to get rid of it. The normal anxiety is to be found in some external situations. The more aggravate anxiety of neurosis comes out from the internal dangers.

Hysteria is generally featured by a loss of functions. Its symptoms are psychogenic paralysis of the limbs, blindness, insensitivity, deafness and the decline of intelligence. In such a situation, the mind does not function of its working. Here hysteria can be distinguished between two subtypes: dissociated and conversion hysteria. In the dissociated state, two or more separate and markedly different personalities exist in the same person. Conversion means symptoms such as hysterical paralysis of the arms and legs, functional blindness, anesthesia, and so on (Horney, 427).

Obsessive thought and compulsive behaviour are also classified as neurosis in psychoanalysis. Generally known as obsessive compulsive neurosis, the general feature in obsessional neurosis is the persons feeling forced to think certain thoughts and to execute certain acts. Freud says, "in obsessional neurosis patients mind is forced to think certain things which are not only tedious but painful as well. His thoughts are obsessive and the actions compulsive or realistic" (188).

People who in later life become psychoneurotic are found tense and anxious as child. It is mainly caused by deep constitutional instability and hypersensitivity, responsible factor that develops psychoneurosis in later years. There improper adjustment in childhood are often mechanized by interrupting and unfavorable influence in the early life. The more important of these influences are mental overprotection, rejection, excessive fondling, pathological parental adjustments, domineering parents etc. Freud opinions accordingly but he focuses mostly on the parental influences on the restriction of infantile sexuality.

Study of the life histories of psychoneurotic patients usually reveals that the onset of symptoms was preceded by some distressing emotional experiences or mental conflicts. Disappointing love affairs, financial reverses, death in the family,

terrifying accidents, interfamilial discord and occupational maladjustments are some common examples. Since the symptoms follow the emotional trauma, there is a temptation to regard the trauma as the cause of the psychoneurosis. But it is faulty assumption. Freud says, "Every neurosis contains such a fixation, but not every fixation leads to a neurosis" (233).

If emotional disturbances and mental conflicts were themselves capable of producing a psychoneurosis, almost everyone would be a psychoneurotic for everyone at some time encounters a bitter disappointment or failure, is beset with burdensome responsibilities, frustrations etc. Furthermore, no statistics shows that upsetting experiences occupy with any greater frequency among the psychoneurotic than among the healthy population. The significant difference is that the more rugged normal individuals take these experiences in their strides, but the potential psycho-neurotics are incapable of successfully adapting themselves to the rigors of life. Thus the cause for the psychoneurosis is to be found in the individual rather than in his life experiences. Emotional trauma and mental conflicts produce temporary instability persons having robust psychological constitution but for the weaker ones they may lead to neurosis.

Association or conditioning may also play vital role to lead a person to psychopathology. The main idea of conditioning is that emotions, impulses sensations experienced under certain conditions may become so strongly associated that the chance occurrence in the future of some element of the original situation will reinstate the original reaction. Thus, a person who suffers form nausea, headache and dizziness following a railroad accident may experience the same symptoms for months afterward whenever he rides on a train. So, according to this process individuals



habitually react inappropriately to present stimuli because of past associations.

Hollingworth writes:

To be neurotic is not merely to have established an unserviceable habit adjustment. To be neurotic is above all to be the kin of person who is always forming such unserviceable or unsagacious habits, even under circumstances or in a world other people form useful ones. (362)

Karen Horney's ideas are based on Freudian model, that retains the concept of repression of unconscious mind. She has rejected the Freudian concept of libido and heredity. Horney views that neurosis is caused because of insecure childhood experiences. Yet she does not reject the fact that conflict in later life can contribute to the molding of neurotic personality.

Horney points out how a child acquires feelings of isolation and insecurity as a result of exposure to such adverse environmental influences as absence of affection, parental domination and over protection. Page writes:

In attempting to get along in a potentially hostile world the child may move toward people and obtain security and a sense of belonging by being submissive and dependent. The child moves against people and aggressively fights his way in the world. He moves away from people and live in an isolated private world. Normal people combine and integrate these three attitudes and thus achieve a balanced, unified personality. (195)

Horney maintains that neurotic has rigid personality and is unable to achieve this unity. These contradictory attitudes remain irreconcilable. This conflict between contradictory and incompatible contrary with that of Freud. She believes that the

important factor responsible for the constitution of neurosis lies not in the presence of the conflict but the nature of the conflict itself.

In neurotic personality, Horney presents a number of needs that are acquired as a consequence of trying to find solutions for the problem of disturbed human relationships. She calls these needs 'neurotic' because they are irrational solutions to the problem.

Horney believes that the basic anxiety i.e., the feeling that the world around him is hostile and dangerous, is the dynamic center of neurosis. Thus a person having anxiety is helpless, irritable and beset with the thought that something within him is out of gear that controls his freewill. In such a condition he feels confusion both in his profession and life as well. In such a situation he has to refuge in some defensible mechanisms so that it can help him revive reassurance against his anxiety:

The more unbearable the anxiety the more through the protective means have to be. There are mainly four principle ways in which a person tries to protect himself against the basis anxiety: affection, submissiveness, power, withdrawal. (96)

Freud's clinical work primarily involved adult patients, as he developed his understanding of neurosis in adults he was led to explore his early childhood experiences of his patients. Childhood thus became highly significant to Freud, who theorized that adult neurosis had their origins in childhood conflicts. Freud asserts:

The influence of childhood makes itself felt already in the situation of the beginning of the formation of a neurosis, since it plays a decisive part in determining whether and at what point the individual shall fail to master the real problems of life.

(Freud 54)

Freud insisted upon the natural sexual of children, in the face of adult attempts at repression, as an early form of child advocacy. His writings contain various asides indicating his concern for children or at least for non-repressive child rearing practices.

Repression, in psychoanalytic theory, is when a desire thoughts or feeling that causes conflict and therefore anxiety is banished from or denied access to consciousness awareness, Repressed desires continue to press for expression however, and may manifest themselves if only indirectly at times when the censor of defensive processes of the ego are relaxed. The concept of repression necessarily implies a psychodynamic mode of the psyche in which two or more mental systems interact. Repression still retained its primary as a defensive process though it was often accompanied by other mechanisms of defense such as projection. But for Freud repression is an intrinsic feature of civilized life a normal part of human development.

Repression is one of the central defense mechanisms by which the ego seeks to avoid internal conflict and pain, and to reconcile reality with the demands of both id and super-ego. Freud says:

the unconscious mechanism whereby unacceptable impulses or memories were kept hidden from awareness as a basic defense which the ego uses to ward off anxiety, Repression is completely normal and integral part of the developmental process through which every child must pass on the way to adulthood. (560)

The repressed instinctual drive, as an energy-form, is not and cannot be destroyed when it is repressed-it continues to exist intact in the unconscious, from where it exerts a determining force upon the conscious mind, and can give rise to the dysfunctional behaviour characteristic of neurosis. The difference between 'normal'

repression and the kind of repression which results in neurotic illness is one of degree, not of kind. The compulsive behaviour of the neurotic is itself a behavioural manifestation of an instinctual drive repressed in childhood. Starchy asserts:

the behavioural symptoms are highly irrational, but are completely beyond the control of the subject, because they are driven by now unconscious repressed impulse. Freud positioned the key repressions, both for normal individual and the neurotic in the first five years of childhood that held them to be essentially sexual in nature. This sexual in particular, lead to strong tendency to later neurosis in adult life. (162)

Repression is probably the best defense mechanism because it can help in checking extremely intense impulses while other defenses are impotent. It is a process of ignoring or forgetting charged psychic contents for they are not in the help of the society or the subject himself is given direct access. The impulses are stored, being repressed, on the unconscious mind and are manifested in the psychological errors, creative activity, neuro behaviour, dreams etc. According to Freud, these repressed material are very likely to emerge in dreams in distorted form. This is the reason why he calls dreams the royal road to the unconscious.

Psychological repression is a special case of internal conflict. Hence, it is distinct from social or political repression. Those social or political forms of repression are cases of external or interpersonal conflict, whereas psychological conflict is intra-personal. In psychological, a person manages to hide from himself certain facts about himself (certain feelings, desires, wishes, aversions, fears, etc.) that are important reasons, are too painful to acknowledge. Although the person believes these unacceptable facts are not the case, they have not really “gone away” but have

taken up a kind of underground existence where they continue to be at work, in sponsoring fantasies that the person can indulge only in disguise form.

The mind conspires to arrange that continue to have the bad wishes, but in such a fashion that they never appear. By some kind of mental sight of hand ending up assigning the two incompatible parts of the people to two distinct domains-one conscious and other unconscious. And the only communication between these two divorced realms of the self occurs when one's unconscious wishes take on some sort of distinguished form in which they can emerge into consciousness without being recognized.

Repression is different form suppression. Both are Freudian concepts concerned with removing unwanted or unpleasant memories form one's consciousness. Repression differs form suppression in that it is not consciously engaged. Whereas suppression involves the conscious desire to forget, repression happens subconsciously. Freud developed his theory about repression once he discovered that his patients very often were unable to recall specific events or situations related to the symptoms of their particular psychosis. In the beginning Freud theorized that the repression was the cause of his patient's anxieties, but eventually realized that the process worked the other way around: it was their anxiety that had caused the repression.

In its simple term, repression works by the virtue of the idea that traumatic episodes in a person's life are thrust deeply into their subconscious. Starchy further views:

the person becomes incapable of dealing with the emotional uncertainty and instability that those memory produce. Over the course of the development of modern psychology, repression became one of

the foundations of the field and extended from being related to specific traumatic events. (164)

To explain how the brain eschews retainment in the conscious realm thoughts that are found to be objectionable to the ego. The problem with repression is that though it may be a successful defense mechanism against consciously remembering unpleasant things, those memories still play a part in the development of conscious acts. This is to say that memories one no longer can pull into the consciousness are still capable of being manifested, usually doing so through personality traits, values and morality or in the most extreme cases, unexplained psychotic behaviour. In addition, repressed memories are also at the root of what is known as Freudian slips, jokes, fantasies and even it is thought, dreams.

The symptom in psychoanalysis arises through repression. Symptoms emerge when strong emotional reactions are repressed from the conscious mind into unconscious. They simultaneously become displaced onto the body. Displacement involves the shifting of an emotional reaction from one part of one's life, or one area of the body to another. The formation of hysterical symptom consists of a shift in register from the mind to the body; what the mind cannot accept, the body acts out without comprehending it.

Freud and Breur discovered that helping a patient to remember and relieve the painful experiences that created the symptom could make the symptom disappear. The doctor and patient worked together to rid the patient of his traumatic memories.

Commenting on symptoms Stevens says:

The assumption of studies on hysteria is that uncovering a reason behind an illness will instigate a cure. Psychoanalytic theory, in this sense, puts a great deal of weight on the act of interpreting and

understanding a symptom, as well as on recalling the first time the symptom appeared and what provoked it. Once a problem is consciously understood, rather than unconsciously acted out the movement towards getting rid of it can begin. (56)

Freud understood the unconscious as dynamic, unconscious impulses were thought to be constantly active, influencing the preconscious and conscious-sometimes in discernable ways, Freud's explanation for slips of tongue is substitution of an unconscious thought for what was unconsciously intended. By considering these conscious influences, Freud found meaning in what others saw as trivial mistakes for example, when a man calls his wife by his mother's name. His theory of humor is similarly based on the dynamic interaction between conscious and unconscious.

Freud's theory of unconscious became more complex in the course of his writings. At first he assumed in the course of his writings. At first he assumed that everything which was unconscious had once been conscious and had been repressed. The paradigmatic example was the subject who under hypnosis could be given some post hypnotic suggestion, such as to open an umbrella indoors, but told to forget that he had been given that instruction. When the trance was ended, the subject would comply with the suggestions and open the umbrella indoors, but be unable to explain why he had done such a silly thing. Thus, his behaviour was influenced by an idea about which he had no conscious awareness. Freud believed that his patients, like hypnotic subjects, were capable of splitting off from consciousness certain ideas and feelings by a defensive process he called repression. These repressed unconscious ideas could influence the patient's behaviour, producing neurotic symptoms without his awareness.

Freud's clinical work demonstrated that the most significant repressed ideas led back to childhood experiences. The content of the unconscious seemed to be ideas and tendencies, mainly sexual and aggressive which he thought of as instinctual and biological which were repressed under the moral influence of the environment.

Commenting on Freudian unconscious Meredith Skura says:

The principle difference between Freud's and the neo-Freudians' interest in the history of the subject is that the neo-Freudian's go further back. While Freud focuses on the oedipal conflict between a well defined self and the world of the father and sees castration as the primary threat to integrity, the object-relations analysts study the origins of the self in relation to the mother and in the process of "hatching" from a preoedipal unity with her. (352)

The repressed remained active in the unconscious and continued in dynamic interaction with the conscious. Thus Freud's conception of the unconscious emphasized the continuing and irrational influence of the past on the present.

Freud's concept of the unconscious is derived from his study of dreaming. He viewed the unconscious as striving towards immediate discharge of tension. Dreaming and unconscious thinking are described as primary process thought, that is, they are unreflective, concrete, symbolic, egocentric, associative, timeless, visual, physiognomic and animistic, with memory organized about the imperative drive, in which wishes are equivalent to deeds and there is a radical departure from norms of logic—for example, contradictory ideas exist side by side.

Carl Jung, probably the greatest figure in psychoanalysis next to Freud, was an early advocate of what he called the collective unconscious shared by the human race. He based this conception on the endlessly recurring in the history of civilization. The Oedipus



myth of the Greeks is the oedipal dream of modern times. Freud and Jung look these ideas quite literally, believing that the individual was born not only with instinctual tendencies, but also with inherited complexes and symbols-for example, the serpent as a phallic symbol. Despite his eventual break with Jung, Freud maintained his own version of a collective unconscious, which also included the idea that certain moral concepts such as taboos had been inherited (Campbell 58).

Freud contributed to psychoanalysis by analyzing and studying dreams. In his book, *The Interpretation of Dream*, Freud explored the dynamic function of unconscious mind. To Freud, dream represents hidden desires, wish fulfillment and unacceptable thoughts. Dream is a mental process. Although it seems distorted, yet it is meaningful, purposeful and symbolic. In his early stage of dream analysis, Freud believed that dream is simply wish fulfillment of those wishes of id and superego which could not be gratified in real life and they are fulfilled sleeping stage when the ego is in relax. Every dream represents rejected and repressed wishes. Freud says:

Most of the artificial dreams constructed by imaginative writers are designed for a symbolic interpretation of this sort: they reproduce the writer's thoughts under a disguise which is regarded as harmonizing with the recognizing with the recognized characteristics of dreams.

(129)

Those dreams are attempted wish fulfillment dreams which create violent inner conflict for the gratification of unconscious Id which is a threat to the ego. Those unacceptable thoughts and wishes appear in symbolic form in dreams. Those symbols have universal meanings.

Jung says that enigmatic aspect of dream is viewed, not as the product of censoring by the ego, but rather as a function of our lack of conversance with the

primal language combined with the essential mystery of the never completely knowable (Haynie 28). He says that dreams from the level of personal unconscious use no people and places as vehicles of expression, motif beyond the level of personal experiences are conveyed through archetypal images which reach into all those world mythologies which have symbolized the evolution of human psyche. Within the individual psyche, this archetypal imagery represents configuration of psychic energy.

Fantasy is an activity of thinking pleasant situation which hardly occurs in real life situation. For Houghton Mifflin, unconscious fantasies underlie not only dreams but all thought and activity, both creative and destructive, including the expression of internal object relations. They modify external events, investing them with significance. He says:

Infantile feelings and phantasies leave, as it were, their imprints on the mind, imprints that do not fade away but get stored up, remain active, and exert a continuous and powerful influence on the emotional and intellectual life of the individual. (290)

Also known as day dreaming, fantasy is one of the common elements. Fantasy reflects our wishes, hopes and even frustrations. We try to avoid hardships and unpleasant situation of our real life and try to gratify the unfavourable situations. An individual pretends to become superhuman by fantasizing dreaming himself (280).

Aggression, a disorganizing emotional response is generally traced by intense frustrations and leads an individual to hostile or destructive behaviour. The destructive impulse may be directed against other people, things, or environment outwardly; or against the self, leading toward suicidal or self-destructive activities inwardly. The Freudian notion of two fundamental forces in human beings, death instincts and life instincts are the primal determining forces of human existence. But

every strivings are not subsumed under life instincts. So, aggressiveness, destructiveness, sadism, the drive for control and mastery are manifestations of the same force the death instincts. Coleman asserts, "aggression is an innate drive possessed by human beings from the moment of birth works against sexual drive contributing the development of personality, which find expression in behaviour" (58).

Initially Freud took aggressiveness as a sexual instincts, later he revised this theory. He liberated it from sexual instinct as a quality of ego instincts which opposes and hates the intrusion of outside stimuli and obstacles to the satisfaction of sexual and self-preservative need.

Depression, in psychoanalysis, is another cause of personality disorder. It takes birth after repression of aggressive impulses. When aggression releases it comes back to its own origin. It creates a mood or an emotional state marked by sadness, inactivity and reduced ability to enjoy life. Depression is different form simple grief or mourning which is an emotional response to some kind of loss. It is a symptom of mood disorder characterized by intense feelings of sadness, decreased initiative, helplessness, hopelessness, failure etc. Psychoanalytically, depression is held to result from guilty feelings arising from the redirection against the self of unconscious hostility to others. Storr finds depression as "an illness that interferes with the capacity of the self to be itself" (45).

Anxiety will be covered form two major psychological points of view. One is the psycho dynamic and the another is behavioural.

Freud described such in the following chronological sequence as early source of anxiety (a) absence of mother (b) punishments that lead to fear of loss parental love (c) castration fear or the female equivalent during the Oedipal period and (d)

disapproval by the superego or self-punishment for action a person takes that he or she does not accept as right just for moral. In the cases of the ego of child can react with anxiety. A child may come to fear his own instinctual wishes and react with anxiety, which follows him or her to oppose the instinctual wishes by compelling the ego to oppose the wish that raised his or her anxiety.

### III. Portnoy's Psychological Dilemma

In the novel, *Portnoy's Complaint* there is a central character named Alexander Portnoy as a narrator. He delivers this monologue to his doctor, Dr. Spielvogel. Another character is Sophie who is strict in her morality and Jewish family values. The atmosphere in the household is far more orthodox and the Portnoys have been more strongly influenced by American values than they are seen to be aware of. In fact, the greatest achievement that they can think of is material success, and they persecute their son with demands that he fulfill the expectations and establish himself as a respectable citizen with a wife and family. Alex's father says to him "Don't be dumb like your father, don't marry beautiful, don't marry love, marry rich" (5). Alex also wants to follow his father's saying in reality.

Sophie wants to preserve Jewishness in her house. Alex, on the other hand, wants to get rid of it and does not want him to be recognized by his religion. Instead, he wants to live a life of his own. Alex tries to reject all things Jewish and struggles to become integrated into what he regards a desirable, a secular and liberal way of life. In his house, he becomes a repressed character and his mother who imposes rules without caring his desires becomes a repressor. The desire to live a liberal and secular way of life and the moral value of house makes Alex swinger. He swings among two different poles that cause dilemma in him. He tries to resist and get away from the orthodoxy prevalent in his religion.

Repression is one of the major causes of disturbed mentality in Alex. the repression since his childhood days affects his ability to decide properly. The growing interest in self-eroticism and the fantasy of romance shadows his outer reality of being a Jew and son of domineering mother. As a result, his fantasy and imagination

become livable that brings Alex to his psychic world of neurosis where he is dominated by his unconscious impulses.

During his school age, young Alex has an image of his mother who is deeply embedded in his consciousness. He says, "Each of my teachers was my mother in disguise. As soon as the last bell had sounded, I would rush off for home, wondering as if I could possibly make it to our apartment before she had succeeded in transforming herself" (3). He loves his mother, yet more than love he has a fear of his mother. Sophie used to observe each and every activities of Alex. His father is a passive character who almost remains silent. He knew that his father and the sister were innocent of his mother's real nature. Alex says:

And the burden of betrayal that I imagined would fall to me if ever come upon her unawares was more than I wanted to bear at the age of five. I think I even feared that I might have to be done away with were I to catch sight of her flying in from school thorough the bedroom window. (4)

In his house Alex has to obey the rules established by his mother. His mother threatens him to eat with a bread knife in her hand. Sophie does not like him to be out of her control. As Alex says, "So my mother sits down in a chair beside me with a long bread knife in her hand. It is made of stainless steel, and has little saw like teeth" (16).

In his home environment, Alex becomes an oppressed character where his burning desires of his age become repressed by family values represented by Sophie. In his clinical work Sigmund Freud said that conflict in childhood days remains one of the influential factor in the latter age of adolescence and adulthood as well. Same is

the case with Alex. The conflict between his desire to become a potent man and the agonizing religion and family values follow to beset in his mind.

He cannot act properly and is unable to chose. This is his dilemma caused by his psychotic mind. He has two options of whether to choose his family values or to get rid of it and enjoy his wishes and longings that he has repressed since his childhood days. Commenting on Roth's hero Greenfield says:

*Portnoy's Complaint* is a continuous monologue narrated by its eponymous speaker, Alexander Portnoy, to his doctor, Dr. Spielvogel. The narration weaves effortlessly through time and describes scenes from each stage in Portnoy's life, with every recollection in some way touching upon Portnoy's central dilemma: his inability to enjoy the fruits of his sexual adventures even as his extreme libidinal urges force him to seek release in ever more creative (and, in his mind, degrading and shameful) acts of eroticism. (45)

As Alex reaches puberty, he indulges in an obsessive chronic masturbation. His obsessive attitude and the sexual fantasies provide him a relief from the bondages of his religion and morality. The morality and religion which Alex tries to get away from, become the hindrances. As a result, Alex has to say "Let's put the Id back in yid!" (124). As he gets into the age of puberty he attempts to liberate himself from his psychological world. He chooses the self eroticism which is also the obsession as a liberating force that gives him freedom from his bitter reality, as he says, "batter ram to freedom" (33).

In his home, Alex commits frequent masturbation inside the toilet and spends a long time. When he is asked by Sophie, he replies it diarrhea. Sophie asks "Diarrhea, was it mostly liquid or was it mostly poopie?" (22). Alex does not reveal

the truth. Rather he suppresses his libido<sup>1</sup> and does not let it out. His activities remain unknown to Sophie. Sophie thinks that Alex has been eating wrong things after school, and therefore, hanging around with the wrong people. Sophie locks him inside the toilet, yet inside the toilet his sister, Hannah's bra facilitates one of his sexual fantasies. "Then Hannah's brassiere begin to move. To swing to and fro ! I veil my eyes, and behold" (21). Alex wants fantasy that is more livable than his reality. Whenever he closes his eyes and thinks of fantastic moment it gives him a solace from his traumatic reality where he faces his unpleasant reality. As he says, "I am crying. There is no good reason for me to be crying" (25).

Alex becomes so hysteric that during his ninth year one of his testicles gets swollen. He has to check it up for six months. Alex's plea to his doctor is an anguished one to make him a man to take away his fears, to give him courage to stand up as himself. The anxiety of neurosis works in Alex. The strains and stress are the main cause that hindered him from being a potent man. The escapement form Judaism is not easier as Alex attempts it. Rather Alex pursues some of rebellious quality with more precision. Sometimes he feels helpless because he thinks himself entrapped in Jewish values. He says, "Doctor Spievogel, this is my life, my only life, and I am living it in the middle of a Jewish joke only it ain't no joke. Bless me with manhood ! Make me brave ! Make me strong" (36).

In school, when he was very little boy, he remembers chanting "I am master of my fate" (37), but then his testicles withdrew. For Alex, to be master of one's fate is to be centerfielder, to be Duke Snider. Centerfielder is like a control tower (an appropriate phallic symbol). It is in the place of, unlike the Portnoy home, where no one can take what is not his. Alex wonders if there are people who actually feel the

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<sup>1</sup> Libido: An extreme urge or energy for sex.



confidence of a centerfielder everyday. Though he has form and style and is a star on his team, he must admit that he can only make it in a softball league. At fourteen, Alex decides that he will not go into the synagogue again; Judaism a sour grape of religion. In this sense, Roth stands him beyond any religion. He wants to get away from his Judaism where Alex is recognized not by his religion, but as a potent personality. Alex happens also to be a human being. But his sister insists he is a Jewish boy, a condition that he may not wish to acknowledge. As Alex regards:

But I am something more, or so they tell me. A Jew. No ! No ! An atheist, I cry. I am nothing where religion is concerned and I will not pretend to be anything that I am not ! I don't care how lonely and needy my father is the truth about me is the truth about me and I' sorry but he'll just have to swallow my apostasy whole ! (72)

On occasion, he does feel joy at the prospect of being a man, once when he is riding in a truck at sunrise with his brother-in-law he is reborn; he feels so American that he promises that when he is grown man he will go into public service. He thought too that he would love growing up to Jewish manhood, "a perfect joining of clown and competitor" (244).

Next, Alex narrates and brings us back to the present. He is in his thirties. He becomes mature and we learn that he has escaped from his domineering mother. In his early years of life when he was traumatized and had to live in fear, Alex said, "Oh where was the gusto, where was the boldness and courage? Who filled these parents of mine with such a fearful sense of life" (35). Now he has crossed that way of life living under someone by repressing his wishes. Alex seems to have liberated from his dogma and family values. This time Alex wanted to assimilate himself as a fully American. He felt all the bondages of religious shackles have torn apart. Alex,

however, was wrong to think so. It is because Jewishness always mattered him. His escapist attitude of liberation does not succeed. Jefferson Chase described Alex Portnoy as:

The loathsome figure whom the anti-semites have conjured in their imagination and portrayed in their literature. The “complaint” broadens to encompass Portnoy’s problematic polymorphous sexual urges and his longing for integration into Gentile society. Familial conflict thus becomes a cypher for the erotic and social frustration including religion of the young Jewish-American, whose possibilities for self-fulfillment—that most American of dreams – stand tantalizingly open, yet lead to a number of irresolvable conflicts. (42)

Even he escaped, Alex used to visit his parents once a week. He thinks he has left the guilt ridden past and wants to enjoy his life to the utmost as a fully American. On the one hand, he is not courageous enough to rebel against Judaism and on the other he has a life of his own. Even in his present condition of life, he cannot violate the rules and established norms and values. What Alex does not like about Judaism is the over imposing and superstition prevalent among the Jews. Further, Alex rebels against those established norms that are regulating the Jews like his mother. This rebellion of Alex is the unconscious state of rebellion because Alex states “Look, am I exaggerating to think it is practically miraculous that I’m ambulatory? The superstition ! The watch-its and the be careful ! You mustn’t do this; you can’t do that – hold it ! Don’t you are breaking an important law ! What law ? Whose law ?” (34).

Alex cannot rebel against his religion because it is a matter of heresy, nor can his desire of real manhood be allowed in a real sense. The choosing one is the defiance of other. This state of his life makes him a swinger, a person of dilemma,

expressing of desire in a limited sense. The psychological repressed character of neurotic state expresses something that comes as a slip of tongue when he says, 'I saw less sexual apparatus than I did of her erogenous zones" (42). The unconscious repressed desire appears only in a disguise form.

Along with his family values and Sophie herself, religion is one of the reason that causes neurosis in Alex. Roth says of being Jewish, "It's a complicated, interesting, morally demanding, and very singular experience" (30). To Alex, it is a hindrance to be overcome. He initially believes he must shadow the Jewish identity with which he has been imbued, but it is Jewishness that casts a shadow on other controlling relationships. Helge Norman Nilsen says:

On the intellectual level, at least, he leaves no doubt as to his complete lack of enthusiasm for all the basic tenets of Judaism and attitudes that go with them. There is a quality of sincerity in his abandonment of Jewish beliefs which seems to belong to a norm which is stronger, as it were, than the troubled hero, affected by his religion. It may be here that Roth, as implied author, is perceived most clearly in the novel, whereas Alex, the neurotic patient, and narrator, suffers from a lack of distance between himself and much of his experience. (497)

Alex cannot rebel against his religion. The singular attempts of rebellion means an act of heresy. It is his compulsion to complain from his side rather than breaking an established rules and dogmas of Judaism. A neurotic patient delve into the inner thought of himself and is guided by his neurosis. Judaism does not allow Alex to have any relationship with the girls from non-Jewish background. Making a relation means the invitation of penalty. Alex would have liberated if he had no bondages of religion. He would have fulfilled his libido by saying, "So attuned to my deepest desires !"

(44). He narrates an event of his uncle Hymie's reaction to his own son Heshie who dared to be in love with non-Jewish girl, Alice. Hymie did not allow Heshie to marry Alice. Hymie threatened and even fought with his own son, as Alex says:

But my uncle stalked him into a corner, wrestled him to the floor and held him there until he had screamed his last obscenity-held him there (so Portnoy legend has it) fifteen minutes, until he tears of surrender at last appeared on his Heshie's long dark Hollywood lashes. (58)

To break the relation of Heshie's has a fatal blood disease. This event of his uncle's threatening to his own son and over imposing rule has its direct impact on Alex himself. This is the predicament of Alex himself where fear and anxiety limited him to his religion and the rules of home environment even if he is a grown up man.

In the case of Alexander Portnoys, Jewishness is above all a psychological burden that he labours to rid himself of. The intensity of his struggle is evidence of the power both of tradition and the larger culture that is opposed to many of its mores and attitudes. There is much to be said for the view that Alex's battle is against his heritage. It's a modern paradox that the hero cannot quite escape from a tradition that he no longer believes in and thus is doubly victimized.

In the novel, Alex fights or goes against his religion and its orthodoxy by experimenting its authenticity stating; "sour grape of religion" (76). Although Alex cannot go against his religion publicly protesting it, yet he is more and more driven into protective fantasies of psychosis. In contrast to the religion and his family value, nobody would accept his wishes of sex and romance as it germinated in Alex. Values of purity, idealism and culture and his downfall shows that they actively interfere with his functions. They become the mental disease or psychological trauma on the path of his desire to become potent man. His sister, Hannah warns him and says "you are a

Jewish boy, more than you know and all you're doing is making yourself miserable, all you're doing is hollering into the wind" (76). In fact Hannah's warning cannot shape his psychosis.

Roth's novel has a great deal of psychological awareness built into it. The protagonist or hero is typically intelligent and well versed, but his knowledge is of no help in him. Instead, he employs it as the instrument of an endless self-analysis that becomes an exercise in masochism. But on the theoretical level, at least, Alex's insight into his own predicament is remarkable 'a disorder in which strongly-felt ethical and altruistic impulses are perpetually warring with extreme sexual longings, often of a perverse nature'. This diagnosis can be applied to entire Judeo-Christian tradition, not just the specific Jewish context. The nearest parallel to their orthodoxy is found in Christian fundamentalist groups, among whose adherents the psychological dilemma of Alex may be widespread. While analyzing the novel, Helge Norman describes that:

Roth is a late version of the old story of the newcomer struggling to become an American, bent on full assimilation, away from ghetto identity and towards American identity with its much wider horizons of possibility. In this hero there is a sense of sincerity in escaping of Jewish belief, but the norm of Jewishness seems stronger which his hero tried to escape throughout the novel. (499)

In the novel, Alex has a disease of bad conscience. It is the disease of modern culture where people like Alex live. Igor Curuso has described as neurosis is often "disease of bad conscience . . . it is the tension between the idea ego and the internal reality" (541). Throughout the novel, Alex struggles with his psychic mind. He cannot control his conscience for it is constantly in struggle with ego. Because he undergoes

psychological repression, the unconscious wishes take on some sort of distinguished form.

Alex lives a wretched personal life whose emotional instability terms him an abnormal character running after the sexual adventures. His abnormality can be classified as psychoneurotic, psychotic and antisocial person. Childhood habit of obsessive masturbation and with taboos he thinks he would rush outside the tormenting environment. He is not constant in himself and sometimes he does not know what he has been doing. He often gets confused asserting,

Whew ! Have I got grievances ! Do I harbor hatreds I didn't even know were there ! Is it with process, Doctor, or is it what we call "the material" ! All I do is complain, the repugnance seems bottomless, and I'm beginning to wonder if may be enough is not enough. (94)

We come to know through Alex's narration that he has been appointed by the Mayor to be Assistant Commissioner for the city of New York for Human opportunity. Unknown to many, his private life and his professional life were at odds with each other. His professional life becomes his outer reality and his inner reality is the fantasy of romance. In spite of the fact that he is now a grown up man his mother says, "But to us, to us you're still a baby darling" (111). Sophie's feeling does not touch him it is because he lacks love and loves sex.

Fear and anxiety bothers protagonist so much so that his conscience is restrained by other irrational stimuli, and the only way out he can think is freedom. Alex is not reluctant of keeping away from warring desire of perfect manhood. Indeed, his repressive conscience, characteristic of unconscious mind leads him to get touch with the erotic sexual adventure. Nevertheless, Alex's embodiment of sex and self-eroticism vividly indicates his disgusting feeling towards religion and morality.

Alex's reality is harsh where he has to become a typical Jewish son and follow culture and tradition, which for Alex is contaminated by misconception and ill treatment. Although he believes in Judaism, but he denies to practise it. His religion and family values, and his longing to become a potent man entwined forever. His outer reality and his inner fancy and imagination are the forces that cause dilemma. He says, "The bite I can live with, the shins I can live with." These are the sparks that ignite his desire for liberation.

Alex's desire of liberation reaches to its height when he steps on puberty. In this age he searches for sexual outlet and indulges in chronic masturbation. Nevertheless, his home environment becomes suffocating to Alex because his desire to live his own life had been repressed. The chronic masturbation in his earlier life leads him to search for a sexual encounter with various girls in his latter life. Roth made his character a sexually voracious to get out of the traumatic life. Portnoy's habituation of sexuality and self-eroticism is a way giving him an extreme bliss. It is so because unlike his reality of inferiority crushed under family values and restriction, sex and self-eroticism facilitates one of his sexual fantasies. As he says,

Then brassier begins to move. To swing to and fro ! I veil my eyes, and behold - Lenore lapidus ! Who has the biggest pair in my class, running for the bus after school, her great untouchable load shifting weightily inside her blouse, oh I urge them up from their ups, and over, Lenore Lapidus's actual tits, and realize in the same spilt second that my mother is vigorously shaking the doorknob. (21)

Alex's reality is bitter, yet his fantasy becomes a place to live. He could not express this in his real life situation and hide his libido.

He narrates about a time he masturbated while sitting in a bus next to a young non-Jewish female stranger. He finds no one as a sexual object who would quench his desire. This drives him to the apex of fantasizing pleasure. He says,

Oh, in her tiny white skirt with the white satin bloomers, and the white boots that come midway up the muscle of her lean, strong calves ! Oh, Jesus, Legs Dembosky, in all her dumb, blond goyische beauty !

Another icon! (54)

Alex remembers a boyhood friend who committed suicide. His family's general reaction was one of how could he do this to them? This is complemented by all the people who Alex know as a child, who his mother now reminds him off and tells him about their lives and how many children they have. He sees this as his mother's way of asking when he is going to bless them with grandchildren. His internal response to this is that he cannot provide them with children when he is too busy chasing new and exciting types of sex with lots of different people.

Alex's relationship with woman follow a pattern that is established in his battles with his mother. She uses a technique of alternatively smothering him in love and threatening to cast him out of her life altogether, all in the name of giving him a good upbringing. In any case, this is how Alex remembers her behaviour, but at the same time he is afraid of being trapped by them, thus loosing his independence and even identity. His need for love is as strong as his desire for freedom from commitment, and the only solution that seems possible for him as an adult is to lead a life of promiscuity. During his adolescence also, he indulges in frequent masturbation both as a means of satisfying his sex drive and of asserting his sex drive environment impose upon him. Alex asserts his rage "because we can't take any more ! Because you fucking Jewish mothers are just too fucking much to bear !" (121).



On its deepest level his sexual excesses may be regarded as part of his struggle to shadow the identity, yet it is not the complete rejection on his part, rather he wanted to go beyond his religion and stand himself as a potent man. Commenting on the novel, Zaid Mahir says:

Portnoy revolts against institutionalized tradition. By so doing, Roth makes a powerful statement on what it means to be a sensitive human being caught up in middle of coercive discourse that thrives on continuity of tradition and suppression of individual voice. (86)

Alex, a swinger wants to be a carefree hedonist, but his sexual and emotional egotism leads to disappointments and disillusion both for himself and his partners. The women feel exploited by Portnoy, and with reason. He is an attractive man and quite successful in social sense, but he has very little regard for the women's feelings if they fall in love with him and want to marry. He blames for having an "overdeveloped superego" (152) in sexual matters. Alex introduces with five important women of his life. Out of five, four were shiksas. He has a sexual attraction with these women. He is not constant in himself, that is why he happens to come up with different women. Every attempt to get victory over these women by performing physical satisfaction seem failure. In his girl friends, he searches freedom. It is the freedom of repressive desire of an unconscious need.

Among Alex's girlfriends, Bubbles Girardi is Alex's first sexual encounter. Although Bubbles is merely a sexual object to Alex and his friends. She was an eighteen year old girl who had been thrown out of hillside high school and was subsequently found floating in the swimming pool at Olympic park. Both Alex and Girardi used to sit in a ditcher, where Bubbles works over the ironing board when they arrive. There is nobody inside the house. Bubbles' brother, who in former life

was a paratrooper and her father, drives a taxi during the day. Alex says “He is out somewhere chauffeuring gangsters around and doesn’t get home until the early hours, and the mother we don’t have to worry about” (166). Alex wants a good chance to express his feeling to have a physical relation with her. He pursues Girardi to perform oral sex. Bubbles gets convinced and was willing to give Alex oral sex. When he was with his friends, Bubbles agrees only to pleasure one of the boys, with his clothes on, and Alex is chosen.

Alex finds himself failure. He is unable to attain an erection when he attaches himself to Girardi. He finishes the job himself and ejaculates into his own eye. The first attempt of Alex’s liberation through sex and sexuality fails. It is the impotence of Alex that he would have hardly known. This first futile attempt does not limit him to commit and search for other, rather it incites his instincts. For a time being, Alex numbs out believing he has blinded himself, as he says to Dr. Spielvogel, “I am blind. A Shikse has touched my dick with her bare hand, and now I’ll be blind forever doctor, my psyche, its about as difficult to understand as a grade school primer, who needs dreams, I ask you ?” (180).

Alex has an obsessive attitude to sex and sexuality. He does not see any demarcation between Jewish girl and the Shikse, he only knows that by expressing and exposing libidinal desires, he would liberate himself. The failure of physical relation make him understand a sense of inferiority and consequently led him to the verge of least hope of liberation. As a result, he is forced into self-gratification. He says, “It is just as my parents have warned me comes the first disagreement, no matter how small, and the only thing a Shikse knows to call you in a dirty Jew” (180). “Alex’s promiscuity is an attempt to establish sexual freedom for himself, and even for others, but the project is utopian. People seems to need emotional security also,

even Alex, and besides him, many affairs cannot even provide him with a lasting sense of self-esteem. As far as sex is concerned, he is up against a deep seated division within himself which is a major cause of sufferings.

Alex pursues non-Jewish girls as status symbols out of sense of inferiority that drivers partly from his minority origins. When he becomes habituated with families and institution different from his own, his reaction is highly ambivalent. He accepts an invitation to visit the family of his girlfriend Kay Campbell in Iowa, "I am something called a weakened guest ? I am something called a friend from school? What tongue is she speaking ? I am the bonditt, the vantz, I am the insurance man's son" (220). Alex is impressed by their politeness and cool confidence.

Clearly, the liberation from Jewishness is a more complex process than Alex has reckoned with. Alex reacts like a Jew among Gentles. Alex also realized that getting out of his originality may cause him a serious damage. He does not have a total control over his mind and what he does seems strange. It is his mental mechanism that eventually makes him a neurotic patient with a lot of repression inside him. He says, "My wishing hour upon hour of pleasure to a houseful of goyim is sufficient source of bewilderment, there is, to compound the ecstasy of disorientation, the name of the street upon which the Campbell house stands, the street while my girl friend grew up ! skipped ! skated ! hop-scotched sledded ! all the while I dreamed of her existence some fifteen hundred miles away, in what they tell me is the same country" (222).

Alex, instead of only having sexual relationship, he plans to marry Kay Campbell. He tries to acquire her and find in her his liberation. The plan of Alex seems to get failed because the only problem he finds in her is she belongs to non-Jewish background. This event suggests that Alex tries to find his identity in her

girlfriend on the one hand, on the other he pursues romance. He cannot leave either of them. So he carries dualism in him. Alex intends to convert Kay into Judaism and live happily ever after. This resolution of Alex would also relieved him from his traumatic and burning desire of sex inside him. His relationship with Kay deteriorates when he begins to find her boring and predictable. Alex conquers, her, believes he has impregnated her, and dreams of connubial bliss. His relationship and his dream shatters when she refuses to convert herself to Judaism.

Alex, in psychoanalytic term, a patient of obsessive compulsive neurosis, in it the patient's mind is forced to think certain things which are not only tedious but painful as well. His thoughts are obsessive and the actions realistic. Kay lets him remain in his hysteric-obsessive world. She says to Alex, "Why would I want to do a thing like that. He is pushed backward again after Girardi and then Campbell. To Alex, Campbell cannot become a medium of his liberation and this liberation of Alex becomes one of the futile attempts he had been searching for. Commenting on Roth's protagonist, Jefferson chase says:

Portnoy, though, derives very little genuine satisfaction from the relationship. He is chronically unhappy, torn between his over-developed conscience and his over-developed Id. His intelligence doesn't help, for Portnoy possesses just enough self-awareness to recognize his pathology, yet not enough to himself of it. So he suffers.

(47)

Alex suffers because of his dual state of mind. He dreams his wishes to be fulfilled by fantasizing it, yet his belongingness of being Jew is unconsciously stored in his mind. He tries to get rid of it by simply indulging in sex, but the hunger of a sex remained unfulfilled because his id, ego and superego do not work properly as it works in a

normal human being. He is confused character who is in dilemma of whether to carry family value or to enjoy his wishes. Despite the fact that he rejects family norms, yet he still tries to find similarities of Jews in his girl friend.

The liberation, which he sought through sex caused a sense of disappointment in him because he had hoped that one day or other he would reflect his potency and stands himself in Jewish American society. Because Alex underwent his psychic dilemma and confusion, his plea of his wishes got failed that consequently led him to depression. He became more and more psychic, realizing the emotional pain inside him. He began to acknowledge reality which was quite different from his fantasy and dream which he had while committing masturbation. He says:

I was, unfortunately, so astonished by my indignation on that I couldn't begin to voice it. How could I be feeling a wound in a place where I was not even vulnerable? What did Kay and I care less about than one money, and two religion? I just don't want to see you any more. I can't hide my feelings, I'm sorry. (118)

In the portnoy's complaint, Alex repressed his unfulfilled wishes in his memories that ultimately led him to psychoanalyst's couch for the betterment of his psychic disorder from his painful life. Roth has projected the theme of guilt and punishment, dominating the essential Jewish experience. It is scrutinized in the novel, with the aim of articulating dreams and aspirations long suppressed by religious institutions. Zaid Mahir says, "Roth takes his character's complaint to a point of no return where there can be no way out of historical predicament except by dismantling tradition to have a fresh start" (3).

After Kay, Alex next relationship is with Sarah Maulsby, a tall upper class woman with "the face of Botticelli" (265). His fear of commitment proves stronger

than anything any woman can offer. Moreover, when he leaves a woman behind, he cannot help feeling gratified by the hurt that he inflicts on her. Beginning with his mother, he has developed an attitude of excessive dependence on female attentions and a consequent vulnerability towards women which is bound to stir resentment against them within him.

Another complicating factor is that he mixes romance with social climbing in *Gatsby*-fashion, in his flight from Jewishness he falls in love with the background of the Sarah Maulsby. Alex's sexual relations with her are nothing but fancy, just another situation in which Alex "assaulted and surrendered" (264), battle in Alex war against sexual inhibition. He appears to be in control, as seen in his constant pressure on her to perform oral sex. When Sarah refuses to perform fellation on him, he feels doubly wounded because he thinks her refusal is an expression of anti-Semitism. Alex says:

I am wrong. Three months I spent applying pressure to the back of her skull (pressure met by a surprising counterforce, an impressive, even moving display of stubbornness from such a mild and uncontentious person), for three months I assaulted her in argument and tugged her nightly by the ears. (122)

Alex exploits women in this novel. He is attractive man and quite successful in the social sense, but he has very little regard for the women's feelings if they fall in love with him. However he blames himself having an overdeveloped superego in sexual matters. As he looks back on his and Campbell's affair, he demonstrates a keen insight into the reasons why he failed to love her "intolerant of her frailties, jealous of her accomplishments, resentful of her family" (271). However, when she gives in to

his sexual demands, he does not really appreciate that this is her way of expressing her love for him.

Because Alex feels alien in his repressive psychotic world, his dilemma or the torn personality identifies with the female characters and their predicament. He registers and portrays vividly his suffering with the suffering of female, but does not take it quite seriously of them and detaches himself. This detachment of Alex is his wishes to be away from his psychological aspects. More he wanted to be away more he got pain of being impotent.

Frustrative protagonist, after so much attempts of sexual encounter, begins to gratify himself. Alex gives himself too much credit, perhaps to cover up for an insensitivity and sheer coarseness in him which do not fit the image of himself that he wants to preserve. He experiences a fantasy of ending up in hell for his sins and of being castigated for his lack of regard for others. He is told in no uncertain terms that 'suffering mankind' means nothing to him and that the only feelings he has ever experienced have been located in his sexual organs. He says, "A kiss from me would change the world ! Doctor ! Doctor ! Did I say fifteen ? Excuse me, I meant ten ! I meant zero !" (111).

Alex skillfully draws the attention away from his own flaws by constantly finding fault with his partners. He attacks Naomi, the Israeli girl, for criticizing him, but his own attitude to everyone he meets, including the women once he starts reacting to their personalities, is hypercritical, if not downright misanthropic.

Next, Alex meets Mary Jane, the monkey, a willing object of degradation. Jones and Nance argue that Mary Jane is where Alex closet to "uniting desire and feelings of affection" (78). Alex's most strong feeling has been constrained by his family and his religion and that continue to oppress him as he seeks liberation through

sex. His obsession of sex drags him to Mary Jane who is nearly illiterate. Alex desires to educate her and save her. He knows both his family and the public would be appalled by his behaviour.

The girlfriend of Alex, Monkey is unbalanced and sometimes even hysterical, but this must be seen in relation to her frustrated love for Alex. Being a repressed character of neurosis, he is unable to respond to this feeling in her, and his behaviour is almost mechanical and sex oriented. He says, "What am I trying to communicate ? Just that we began to feel something. Feel feeling ! and without any diminishing of sexual appetite !" (191) Alex lacks feelings and emotions in him for women. Rather, he accepts them as means to fulfill his unfulfilled libido.

The personality disorders makes Alex a complex character. The difference between what he attempts to do and what reality really is causes complexity. In an attempt to get relief from mental trauma and intolerance, Alex tries to control his instinct, yet his instinct splits because of his overdeveloped Id and conscience. As a result, Monkey accuses him of lack of feeling and involvement and stands out, in contrast to him. According to Jesse Bier, "He is even worse off, since some benighted Shikshas, like the Monkey, try to fight back into human love or devotion, while the Portnoy's of the modern world heartlessly run out on them" (55).

Alex's painful experience of the past and their memories in present torture and discourage him. He appears disturbed because his childhood repression and the disgusting religion of orthodoxy follow him. In his real life, he cannot rebel or go against his family norms, values and religion, so fantasy and dreams are the places where he can dwell. His fantasy helps him transcend his reality to the unexperienced wishes and desire for sex that stands as his liberating force.



The Portnoy's complaint projects a man with neurotic disintegrated personality which is the result of his childhood repression. He unsuccessfully strive to establish romance and sexuality as they are only ways to get psychological relief from the state of dilemma. Alex also realizes his as he says, "But what my conscience, so called, has done to my sexuality, my spontaneity, my courage ! Never mind some of the things I try so hard to get away with –because the fact remains, I don't. I am marked like a road map from head to toe with my repressions" (124).

To get an outlet of his dilemma, he chose sex and romance that according to him helps him forget his traumatic life. Alex is right in condemning the idiocies of his Jewish background in the process of liberating himself from it, yet he has largely lost the warmth and ability to care for each other. When he sees his futile attempt of liberation even through Monkey, Alex flies to Israel where he finds out one final sexual object.

Frustration, fear and anxiety of being impotence cannot be tolerated. The frustration arises when Alex lacks erection and the society around him. He does not want to be the like that of his father who Alex blames most. When the frustration grows inside him of being an unsuccessful man, fear arises in him of being an impotent. This anxiety works in him and he becomes more pschic in his world. Neither he can step or follow Judaism as a typical son of Jew, nor he can leave his burning desires of sexuality unfulfilled. The liberation for Alex is possible only if he has a sexual intercourse and the overflow of his wild instinct. Alex asks Dr. Spielvogel, "What do you think Doc.? Has a restriction so pathetic been laid upon my object choice? Is it true that only if the sexual object fulfills for me the condition of being degraded, that sensual feeling can have free play? Listen, does that explain the pro-occupation with Shiksese?" (186).

Alex has a relation with much women. After he breaks his relation with Monkey, he flies to Israel. Here, Alex's flying to Israel symbolizes his being away from reality. He sees dream of bliss and has an assimilationist viewpoint. In Israel, he meets Naomi, the Jewish Pumpkin. Naomi is Alex's final effort at liberation through sex before he realizes his impotence. He believes Naomi would liberate him from his traumatic world. He says:

But who was there to rescue me? My Shiksas? No, no, I rescue them. No, my salvation is clearly in this Naomi ! Her hair is worn like a child's, in two long braids – a play, of course, a dream technique if ever there was one, designed to keep me from remembering outright that high school picture of Sophia Ginsky, who the boys called “Red”, who would go so far with her big brown eyes and her clever head.

(260)

Alex sees his Jewish girlfriend as his salvation, and ironically, she reminds him of his mother. Only in retrospect does he realize that one is identical to the pictures of his mother.

His girl friend Pumpkin resembles his mother. He says, “I associate her instantly with my lost pumpkin, when in physical type she is, of course, my mother, coloring, size, even, temperament, it turned out – a real fault – finder, a professional critic of me. Must have perfection in her men. But all this I am blind to: the resemblance between his girl and the picture of my mother in her high school yearbook is something I do not even see” (259). Alex see picture of his mother in his girl friend. It is his incest motivation. Also, Alex decides that he should marry her and stay in Israel reliving on a kibbutz. When he tells her this she accuses him of being insane. This insanity of Alex is an extreme urges supplies by his instinct. Alex

tries again, and although he succeeds in subduing her, he discovers he is unable to achieve an erection in Israel. He has left Mary Jane, who could let him do whatever he wanted, and he finds in Israel a strong woman who reveals his impotence.

Finally, Alex sees not only that he cannot be liberated through sex but that he is no longer capable of having sex. He realizes, “Alexander Protnoy, for degrading the humanity of Mary Jane Reeds two nights running in Rome, and for other crimes too numerous to mention involving the exploitation of her cunt, you are sentenced to a terrible case of impotence. Enjoy yourself” (272). He confesses and his confession is his failure in liberating himself.

Alex follows instincts out of mental disorder rather than the virtue of true man. In premarital attempt of sexual relationship he thinks he would get some sort of pleasure to cover his reality that is the ultimate imagination of his liberation. Commenting Alex, Ladelle McWhorter says, “freedom exists only in its exercise, since it is not a quality or state of being, Portnoy sought liberation is an impossibility” (218).

Alex, in the novel is a psychologically retarded narrator. His obsessive self-eroticism of the childhood habit forces him to find some sexual apparatus. When he realizes his impotence, Alex feels guilt of why he has been searching for something that is unconscious activities. He feels sorry of what he committed in his childhood days. He says, “well, whether it was or wasn’t my job to do, the job is now completed. For better or for worse, wisely or stupidly, I did it” (289). His attempts to liberate himself get failed and falls to gain outlet of his dilemma.

#### IV. Conclusion

Philip Roth's novel *Portnoy's Complaint* can be studied from the viewpoint of neurotic-psychoanalysis. Portnoy's complaint explores the disturbed mentality of the character, Alex Portnoy, whose childhood experience of repression under the domains of over imposing religion and threatening, fear and anxiety bring him to the state of neurosis. Alex belongs to Jews where his wishes and longings are outnumbered. Consequently, he attempts to struggle but when he sees that going against it means an act of heresy, he tries to escape it. As we analyze the novel we can find the protagonist Alex suffers more from psychic traumas of neurosis. Indeed, Roth's characters suffer especially from sexual misconduct, neurosis, obsession and repressive family atmosphere

Roth has projected a hero of emotional sterility because of his suppressed emotion. In such a situation, Alex lacks emotion and he is directed to sex, fantasy and imagination. He longs to have a partner who would measure his suffering that he has suppressed for a long time. Since the blind application of the rules are projected to operate as a frustrating and no liberating factor, Alex tries to find his own identity among his girls friend-dilemma.

In fact, it appears that Alex has escaped and liberated from his mental trauma, but his failure to liberate justifies that Alex has not escaped his state of dilemma and psychological burden and he faced a hard reality at the end of the novel. He is not determined by his fate and cannot be interpreted from the deterministic point of view, rather his unconscious impulses make him a depressed character whose ultimate libido remains unfulfilled.

As Alex is psychological and emotionally victimized by some external factors, he indulges in sex and sexuality. He cannot heal his psychic wound rather he happens

to come across various women and Alex seems to be in control or power of women. Ultimately, he invites suffering, mental stress and depression that lead him to the couch of doctor, Dr. Spielvogel. His inability to control himself brings frustration and anxiety of being an impotent.

Repression is the main cause of mental disturbance in the novel and Alex's upbringing is so strict that his conscience is dominated in the home environment. Jews have the collective consciousness of Judaism and the rejection of it is a complex process. Alex rebels against Judaism in its surface form, but the rejection is against the prevalent blind faith and orthodoxy. He has a disgust feeling against all those norms and values that shadow individuality and identity as a whole. Various references of taboos in the novel are detected against the tradition of the Jews in America. Nevertheless, Alex cannot go against it.

Alex embodies sex as a liberating force both from his tradition and to quench his desire of sex. His childhood habit of masturbation becomes obsessive compulsive behavior of running after the women. Also sex is a medium to cast his outer reality and give a meaning to his inner pleasure. Fear and anxiety of being an impotent leads him to world of fantasy and imagination where he can acquire extreme bliss

Roth's novel implies that psychologically doomed and the state of dilemma cannot be solved by escaping the one. It is vivid that the obsession and fatal neurosis results in the guilty feeling and the tragic one. The fragmentation in the personality results from confusion, frustration, depression and misunderstanding which embarrass us to the inevitability of dark, dense and destructive destination of life. When they are carried simultaneously, confusion and frustration develop as it is seen in Roth's hero Alex Portnoy.

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