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Treatment of Identity Crisis in I.B. Singer's *Shosha*

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Treatment of Identity Crisis in I.B. Singer's *Shosha*

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Abstract

Treatment of identity crisis in I.B. Singer's novel *Shosha* has been analyzed in terms of diaspora. Because of fragmentation and frustration, most of the characters in *Shosha* cannot create their own identity and position rather they are bounded to move from one to another. Diasporic feeling and sense of fragmentation create not only problem in the life of characters in *Shosha* but also create alienation and frustration in the life of Eastern European Jews as well. On the whole, Singer's novel *Shosha* tries to show the situation of the characters and their identity crisis which also represent the problems of Jews in Eastern Europe.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

This research work gives focus on Issac Bashevis Singer's novel *Shosha* (1979). This is one of the most important novels which gives the history of the Jews in Warsaw, Poland before the war. It tries to see how Singer carefully presents and shows the trauma of alienation, dispersion, dislocation and identity crisis of Eastern European Jewish i.e. mainly of Jews of Poland. Singer himself is a figure of intellectual exile. That is why his writing reflects the cultural reality of Eastern Europe especially Poland and its neighbouring countries. So, the research throws light on the condition of dislocation and frustration felt by both writer and his characters Aaron and others as well. The fragmentation and frustration in the life of Eastern European Jews and their attempt to unite has to be taken as the hypothesis of the research work. And to prove the hypothesis, the novel will be studied through the issue of cultural identity. The novel raises the issues of diasporic situation, fragmentation and frustration.

Jews are the original diaspora people in general who moved from Palestine to Babylonia and then to scattered other parts of the world, especially Europe. During the time of dispersion, they got various problems of language, land, culture and religion. They even faced problem of livelihood which made them frustrated. In course of scattering and settling time from place to place, there came fragmentation in the homeland's language and culture. Because of that event, there has come crisis in the original identity in the life of European Jew, especially of Eastern European Jews and that of Jews in Poland. So far as characters in *Shosha* are concerned, every character has identity crisis in terms of language, beliefs, existence, personal matter decision and even in personal relation.

I.B. Singer in his famous novel *Shosha*, presents the main character in a fragmented. The main character of this novel, Aaron belongs to Jewish culture. He falls in love with many women. Even *Shosha*, who is also from Jewish culture, does not have good health physically and mentally. And other characters do not have also fixed-location. They lack something.

Aaron has no stand point since he keeps relation with female characters like *Shosha*, *Dora*, *Celia*, *Betty* and his maid *Tekla*, though he marries to *Shosha* at last. Basically in all the novels, the heroes desire only one woman, but here, lusting after the whole female gender, Aaron simultaneously carries on affairs with the women mentioned over.

If we talk about a couple, *Haiml* and *Celia*, they also have a problem in marital relation since she always follows Aaron forgetting her marital status. *Dora*, a follower of the Communist party, whom Aaron loves truly but their relation ends because of political thought and religion. *Betty*, a leading character of the novel and an actress, desires Aaron by heart even if she has a lover *Sam* but at last she marries a colonel in the American Army. This is the real situation faced by each of the characters in the process of making identity. Yet, they are in crisis. Female characters of the novel always talk about committing suicide and dying. *Betty* commits suicide. *Shosha*, *Celia*, *Dr. Moris* also go in the mouth of death perhaps because of frustration or religious factor.

I.B. Singer wants to give us a picture of pitiable situation of European Jews and their culture relations in the novel *Shosha*. Why does the writer show the characters in such fragmentation and frustration? The causes behind fragmentation and frustration are to be researched. Singer brought one of his major themes, the conflict between the religious and secular life. Among Eastern European Jews, this

conflicts was brought to the foreground by the Haskalah, a period of a great transition for the Jews of Eastern Europe.

Oxford Dictionary defines culture as a refined understanding and appreciation of various artifacts in the society. But the meaning of culture today cannot, and should not, be limited within this. Culture is anything and everything, the way we talk to the way we judge things as good or bad. The body of customary beliefs, social forms and material traits constituting a distinct complex of tradition of racial or religious group make any culture. These days, culture has often been associated with nationality giving the individuals a secular identity. In this sense, culture is a source of identity rather than a force for division and a combative entity.

Likewise, cultural studies is an interdisciplinary field that incorporates studies in literary theory, mass communications, philosophy, sociology and criticism. The theory has its origin in the belief that because human is social in nature, some specific human behaviours are always learned within a particular cultural context. Race, class and gender are the three major areas in which cultural is typically examined, and theorists compare and contrast how these areas are represented in the culture. One of the major areas of concern in cultural studies is cultural identity. Today, identity is an important issue for study. Globalization has increased the rate of cultural amalgamation resulting into various forms of identity crisis.

Issac Bashevis Singer (1904-1991) was born a few miles from Wasaw, in the Polish Village of Leoncin. Singer is a master of so many modes that it is difficult to think him as a single writer since he is known as Polish, Jewish-American writer as well. He is regarded as one of the prominent Jewish writers in American literature. So his writing mainly reflects the cultural reality of Eastern-Europe, especially Poland and its neighbouring countries where Jewish civilization had been frequently

victimized and fragmented by internal and external forces. When Singer was four, his family moved to an apartment on Krochmalna street in Warsaw from Leoncin where people were mixture of Jews, prostitutes, and gangsters. By the mid-nineteen-thirties, with Hitler ascendant in Germany and Polish Fascism on the rise, it was clear to Singer that he would have no future in Poland. So, Singer immigrated to the United States in 1935. In America, he had declared that a real Yiddish writer could not write about America. So, he has set most of his novels in the Jewish past. He wrote many novels and stories and short-fictions. His reputation spread worldwide when he was awarded the Nobel Prize in literature in 1978.

During his life time, he has written so many novels and stories. Among them, *Satan in Goray* is one which deals about a heart rendering tale of cultural collapse in small Jewish community of Poland. *The Magician of Lublin* is another novel which presents an early-twentieth century world of magic and religious questioning. Likewise, his novel *The Slave* is the story of a Jew enslaved by Polish peasants in the seventeenth century. *Enemies, A Love Stories, The Estate, The Manor* are also his famous novels. Likewise, he has published collections of stories and some selected short stories as well. These novels and stories have made him popular and famous novelist.

Shosha is set in Poland between the two world wars. The inevitability of the Holocaust and the utter powerlessness of the Jews in the face both of Polish anti-semitism and of Hitler are taken for granted throughout the story. Aaron says that the Jews in Poland are trapped and will all be destroyed. Hopeless and helpless before this terrible fate, nearly all of the Jews in the novel live only for the present, pursuing pleasure without regard for truth or value. The most intrepid pursuers of pleasure are the characters who speak obsessively of Suicide. Suicides are cast by Singer as

hedonists. On the one hand, it has elements of the history of the Jews in Warsaw before the war and on the other, Singer in this novel sets up a love affair that examines the clashing worlds of modern Jewishness with an age-old culture that remains immovable in its ancient wisdom.

Critics on *Shosha*

I.B. Singer's novel *Shosha* has received serious and favourable critical reviews and responses from various corners of the world since its publication. The critics have read this novel from different perspectives. Among them, some critics' commentaries have been mentioned below.

Edward Alexander says, "the novel usually operates within the old-fashioned traditions of nineteenth-century realism and deal, unmistakably, with question of the national destiny of the Jewish people" (7).

Alexander wants to modify old-tradition of 19th century Jewish culture by not mistaking with question of the national destiny of the Jewish people. For this, Singer finds that the Yiddish theater requires a young writer to sully art with commercial and personal considerations.

James D. Hart in *The Oxford Companion to American Literature*, says that Singer's work deals mostly with the exotic heritage of Polish Jews, their traditional faith and folkways, their colourful personal relationships, their religious fanaticism, and their sexuality, James D. Hart says that Singer, being a Polish-American Jewish writer, has strongly dealt about historical scenario of Poland before world war II. Actual ghetto life of Poland has been described in *Shosha*. He further says, "In *Shosha* (1979) Singer returned to treat the ghetto life of Poland before World War II" (610).

Nina Bawden in the *Daily Telegraph* comments this novel from the romantic point of view. She says that *Shosha* is a haunting lyrical love story set in Jewish

Warsaw on the eve of its annihilation. Multiplication of lovers seems more puzzling and interesting since female characters Dora, Celia, Betty and Tekla always move round to make love affairs with Aaron. But Aaron rediscovers Shosha, his childhood love still living on Krochmaina street, still mysteriously childlike herself ... who has been waiting for him all these years and gets married. She further says, "This beautiful and haunting love story helps to illuminate a terrible riddle" (Cover Page of *Shosha*).

Andrea Caron Kempf is one of the most important critics of Polish culture, especially Jews. He says that "the universality of I.B. Singer is again demonstrated in *Shosha*, a novel about Poland's doomed Jewish intellectuals on the eve of the Holocaust" (1437). He further comments that Singer's characters transcend their ethnic and national background in this tale of author Aaron's love for his childhood friend *Shosha*, a young woman with the body and the mind of a child.

He further connects this novel relating with Nazi Hitler and says: "While Hitler is in everyone's thoughts and conversation, the characters continue to intrigue and love, to be concerned with the mundane, such as the next meal and such as the political ideal" (1437).

Peter B. High comments that Singer has revised old superstitions and tradition in a new form. He further comments, "for most American Jews, the old culture of Jewish superstitions and folk tales had died with their grandparents but his novel brought this lost world back to them" (182).

Mark Schechner, a famous critic of Jewish history, talks about the reality of Jewish cultural disintegration in Singer's novel. He analyzes this novel from the point of view of culture and comments that this novel traces the history of the Jews from their villages and ghettos in Poland to New York's West Side. So, analyzing the series of disaster as a fate for Jews he says: "Singer follows the Jews from disaster to

disaster from chemiclinic to Hitler, depicting the three hundred years in between as a tormented interregnum for a nation in exile, interpret upon survival but ultimately waiting for the end" (215).

Richard Ruland and Malcolm Bradbury in *A History of American Literature* have powerfully presented writing style of Singer. While commenting this novel *Shosha* as well as his other novels, they say "*Shosha* basically deals with the often bizarre and superstitious world of peasant and ghetto Poland" (377).

Michael Rogers, one of the most famous critics, has powerfully brought out love affairs of the protagonist, Aaron. Basically, Rogers has analysed only the love affair between Aaron and *Shosha* but not with others. He further says, "*Shosha* sets in Warsaw on the eve of the Holocaust, this work follows protagonist Aaron Greidinger's love for his childhood friend, *Shosha*" (87).

All the perspectives and commentaries given by the critics and scholars are diverse. This research tries to show cultural fragmentation and multiplication of lovers in *Shosha* which create a sense of frustration. In *Shosha*, it is assumed that there is crisis in identity of European Jews, basically Eastern European and Jews of Poland. So, in the next chapter, the ideas and theory of cultural identity will be basic tool to analyse the text.

The present work has been divided into four chapters. The first chapter is an introduction, i.e., introduction to the writer, elaboration of hypothesis and critical opinions of the critics concerning the text *Shosha*. It also tries to define cultural studies briefly to justify the hypothesis.

Likewise, the second chapter deals with the theoretical modality which is going to be applied in this very research work. In this chapter, basic concept of culture, cultural identity and the term 'diaspora' will be discussed.

After the second chapter, third chapter analyzes the text. The text will be analyzed at a considerable length. It will point out some extracts from the book as evidences to prove the hypothesis. This chapter serves as the core of the research.

At last, there remains the fourth chapter it is the conclusion of the research which will conclude the explanation and argument put forward in the preceding chapters. Thus this research work will try to prove the hypothesis on the basis of the study of this novel *Shosha* from the perspective of cultural identity relating with Jewish diaspora.

Chapter 2

Basic Concept of Culture and the Jewish Culture

i. Culture

Culture is a form of tradition in which society moves. Every society has socially acquired norms, rules, beliefs, religion and so on. And these very norms and beliefs make up what we call culture. In other words, culture shapes the way we think, the words we use and the world of human made objects we occupy.

Culture has now undoubtedly acquired rich and extended meanings. It is not easy to define culture since it possesses multiple layers of meanings. During the medieval period "culture" as cultivation was often associated with the development of religions faith whereas in Roman antiquity it was referred to the cultivation of farming. Likewise, for renaissance humanists, culture was mental cultivation. By the seventeenth century, this process of personal cultivation extended to the point of superior cultivation or refinement.

According to *The Columbian Encyclopedia*, culture is the "integrated system of socially acquired values, beliefs, and rules of conduct which delimit the range of acceptance behaviours in any given society" (696-697). Culture is the fabric of meaning in terms of which human beings interpret their experiences and govern their actions. That's why, these differences take forms of social structure which is a network of existing social relations.

"Culture" is described in *Encyclopedia America* as "a marking out the space of systematic reflection about the process by which people through custom, language and history create themselves" (315). It suggests a particular way of life, whether that of a people, or period or a group. People can create space and system with the help of language, history and custom.

With the help of culture, people began to formulate categories separating "cultured" from "uncultured" or "civilized" from "barbarous" or "vulgar". In this way, along with time the term acquired new meanings since human beings themselves had created and produced it. And particular people and society acknowledged it in their own perspectives.

Matthew Arnold, has given his own opinion. He says that culture is the "best that has been thought and known" in the world. Along Arnoldian, Line, E.B. Tylor defined culture in an ethnographic way. Tylor was more original in his definition of culture. What he says about culture that is "complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, Morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" (1).

Matthew Arnold defined and defended a new secular culture of critical discourse. David Daiches in his book *A Critical History of English Literature* quotes Arnold:

Consider these people, then their way of life, their habits, their manners, the very tones of their voice, look at them attentively; observe the literature they read, the things which give them pleasure; the words which come forth from out their mouths, the thoughts which make the furniture of their minds; would any amount of wealth be worth having with the condition that one was to become just like these people by having it? (4: 974)

Arnold's project was disrupted by the collapse of the 19th century Europe. Culture has undergone a massive change by the mid 20th century. Raymond Williams contrasts this anthropological meaning of culture, denoting the whole way of living of

a people, with the normative meaning of culture. In normative usage, culture still claims to represent the organic voice of people.

Culture is based on the unique human capacity to classify experiences, encode such classifications symbolically and teach such abstractions to others. It is usually acquired through 'enculturation', the process through which an older generation induces and compels a younger generation to reproduce the established lifestyle. Thus, culture is rooted in one's way of life. Culture is difficult to quantify because it frequently exists of an unconscious level or at least tends to be so pervasive that it escapes everyday thought.

Now Mark J. Smith reviews Raymond Williams in three levels to define culture. Firstly, culture as the 'ideal' which refers to the embodiment of perfect and universal values. Secondly, culture as 'documentary' refers to the documented form of human behaviours and thoughts. Lastly, culture as social, as a way of life "Whereby it expresses the structure of feeling of a social group and therefore should be analyzed and valued in terms of their place in art and learning" (Smith 23).

Culture refers to the customary patterns of behaviours and shared values, beliefs and assumptions found within social groups social norms and values determine the culture. According to Stuart Hall, "A ... culture is the whole body of efforts made by a people in the sphere of thought to describe, justify and praise the action through which a people has created itself and keeps itself in existence" (121). It means that culture is a way of thinking, feeling and action as well.

Nevertheless, nobody is explicitly ready to refuse the concept of culture as an organized and integrated system. For instance, Leslie A. White accepts this concept in the context of transmissibility of culture:

Culture is the name of a distinct order, or class, of phenomena ... and in all its aspects, material, social, ideological, is easily and readily transmitted from one individual, one generation, one age, one people, or one region, to another by social mechanisms. Culture is ... a form of social heredity ... a continuum, a supra-biological, extra semantic order of things, and events, that flows down through time from one age to next. (337)

Postcolonial criticism and the postcolonial theory of discourse have made culture a most contested space. Postcolonial criticism took culture to another level. Postcolonial perspectives emerged from the colonial testimony of third world countries and the discourses of "minorities" within the geographical division of east and west, north and south. They formulate their critical revisions around issues of cultural differences, social authority, and political discrimination. Postcolonial criticism, "forces us to engage with culture as an uneven, incomplete production of meaning and value often composed of incommensurable demands and practices, produced in the act of social survival. Culture reaches out to create a symbolic textuality to give the alienating everyday an aura of shelfhood, a promise of pleasure." (Bhabha 438). Observing the culture in this regard, Bhabha further writes:

Culture as a strategy of survival is both transnational and transitional. It is transnational because contemporary postcolonial discourses are rooted in specific histories of cultural displacement ... culture is transnational because such spatial histories of displacement ... make the question of how culture signifies, or what is signified by culture a rather complex issue. (438)

The transnational dimension of cultural transformation: migration, diaspora, displacement, relocation makes the process of cultural translation a complex form of signification. It is from this hybrid location of cultural value, the transnational as the transnational, that the postcolonial intellectual attempts to elaborate a historical and literary project.

ii. Jewish Culture

What we call Hindu religion and culture, in the Hinduism as same way, Jewish culture and religion is said to be Judaism. Judaism is the culture and religion of the Jewish people and its founder was Abraham. It is said that God first revealed his will to Abraham and his (god's) message to Abraham is called the covenant. Genesis is the first book of the Bible where we find this. According to Jewish belief, the Jews were the chosen people of God. They believed that they had been chosen people by God to have relationship to him. They also boasted and believed that god gave them law, promise and performing work to be a witness. The history of Judaism and of the Jews is a long and complicated story, full of blood and tears.

Judaism developed from the religion of the ancient Hebrews. In modern times, Judaism is the name given to the religion and culture of the descendants of the Hebrews, Jews. Judaism not only is a part of the daily lives but it is inseparable also from the lives of the Jewish people as a national group. These Jewish people are called diaspora since they were exiled from their homeland before World War II. But after world War II a Jewish nation, the republic of Israel, was reestablished.

In the book of Genesis, there is mentioned about prophets, divine truth and Torah. Since Jews were the chosen people of God, they believed that God would give them divine truth. There were wise prophets like Moses who received divine truth from God. Then prophets used to pass it to the Jewish people in the form of laws. It

was both in oral and written form. Those divine truths and laws were collected in the Torah. That is why Torah is said to be teaching and preaching book of the Jews as Ramayan and Kuran. Hence it often means the entire body of the truth and wisdom.

In Jewish culture, Rabbis as in our Nepal Pujari prepare the function of worshipping. Jewish culture is guided by the Old Testament and they do not talk about the New Testament since it is about Jesus that Judaism does not accept. Rabbis use to teach about the Torah and collection of their teaching about the Torah is called Mishnah. A commentary of Mishnah was gathered in the Gemara and both of them were gathered into the Talmud. so Talmud is moral and spiritual guidance of Judaism.

There are certain holydays and festivals in the Jewish culture. Rosh Hashanah (the New Year) is one of the holydays which falls in the last of September. It is celebrated for recalling the creation of mankind and the revelation of God as king of the universe. Yom Kipper is another festival in which people repent, fasting. Likewise, Hannukkah is festival of remembrance of the victory in battle of Judas. There are several festivals that Jewish often celebrate.

Judaism teaches that God is the source of truth and there is only one God according to their religion. Belief in only one God is monotheism. They believe that God's truth governs every phase of human life. God is both universal because he is the creator of the universe, and the father of all men. Not only that, some Jews believe in a life after death. It means that there is another life after the death. Though their main point is struggle against the forces of evil in this world, the Jews who do not believe after death want to establish of God's kingdom here rather than in another world. Such Jews believe in the coming of next God as a form of a Messiah and that very Messiah will establish God's kingdom on earth.

On *The New Encyclopedia Britannica*, it is clearly written:

According to Jewish belief, it is through the historical evolution of man, and particularly of the Jewish people, that the divine guidance of history constantly manifests itself and will ultimately culminate in the messianic age. Judaism, whether in its "normative" form or its sectarian deviations, never completely departed from this basic ethical historical monotheism. (403)

The history of Judaism can be viewed as falling into the following major periods of development and those are Biblical Judaism (c. 20th – 4th century BCE), Hellenistic Judaism (4th century BCE-2nd century CE), Rabbinic Judaism (2nd – 18th century CE), and Modern Judaism (c. 1750 to the present). Even in modern time, Jews are put in various groups like Orthodox, Conservative, or Reformist. In spite of various groups, all claim direct spiritual descent from the Pharisees and rabbinic sages. And these groups differ in terms of observing the law and traditions. The orthodox group wants to preserve ancient tradition, the Sabbath law and the ancient practices. This group condemns eating all types of pork. Likewise the reform group feels that the literal interpretation of the Torah has kept the Jewish people too isolated from others. So this group believes that the mission of Judaism should be a universal one, and that the Jews should serve as an example and an inspiration to others of the community. The reform movement also has interpreted about the loss of the homelands of Palestine and the diaspora as the blessing rather than as a national disaster. So, the reform group wants some sort of changes which must be needed. And the next group is Conservative. This group believes in some modernization in the field of Jewish culture though it wants to preserve the historical tradition and rich heritage of the

Jewish people. What this group believes is keeping the old tradition and changing the poor tradition.

Jewish culture has got wide meaning after the world war I and II as a result of the holocaust. There is crisis in Jewish identity because of increasing secularization and multiculturalization. In the United States, there is open society and the society is said to be a melting pot. So, not only Jews, people from different cultures can have a feeling of secularism. Since 1930s the Soviet Union government has banned the teaching of Judaism and Jewish culture to the young.

However in the United States, more than 80 percent of Jewish children receive some formal religious training. Some young Jews are in a quest for tradition. Despite their lack of traditional piety, there is general sense among Jews that they remain Jews not because of the force of antisemitism but because of the attractiveness of their tradition and their sense of a common history and destiny.

Cultural Identity and Crisis

Identity has become the central area of concern in cultural studies during the 1990s. Identity is the process how we describe ourselves to each other. Culture creates enormous pressure for conformity today as it is often referred as the individual or group identity. Identity is the meaning or self-concept that one gives to oneself or the meaning in general that human beings give to themselves. In other words, it is the sum totality of values attached to individuals by an age and a community, in terms of their class, caste, group or culture and institution of any kind. Relating this issue Stuart Hall in his essay *Cultural Identity and Diaspora* finds at least two different ways of thinking about "cultural identity":

The first position defines 'cultural identity' in terms of one shared culture, a sort of collective 'one' true' self, hiding inside many other,

more superficial or artificially imposed selves; which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common. Cultural identity in the second sense is a matter of becoming as well as of being. It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, times, history and culture. (111-12)

Identities are the product of discourses and regulate the individual's worldly perception. They are not things which exist simply there with universal qualities, rather they are discursive constructions. Thus, in this sense, identities are constituted or made. Balibar perceives: "identity is never a peaceful acquisition: it is claimed as a guarantee against a threat of annihilation that can be figured by another identity or by erasing or identities" (186).

So far as concerned identity of diaspora and basically talking about Jewish diaspora, their actual identity gets slightly changed in course of scattering from place to place and time to again. Language, memory and religion are the main controversial aspects of the diaspora people. In most cases, the homeland language has disappeared from usage in face of the pressure of the dominant language. So diaspora identity is fortified by national narratives connected with the homeland, including periods of glory and tragedy. But it is also the case that diaspora people always want to keep their collective identities whenever they go. However they have faced and familiar with other religion, cultures, customs in course of their settling. Even within Jewish culture, there seems to be fragmentation in terms of worshipping God and beliefs. And next one thing is that their cultural identity is powerful though it has been mingled with others' culture and identity. So is the case that there seems to be identity crisis in diasporic Jewish which to be analyzed through cultural perspective.

Today identity is an issue of studying into the ethnic, class, gender, race, sexuality and sub-cultures. Globalization had increased the rate of cultural amalgamation resulting into various forms of identity crisis.

Diaspora and Jewish Diaspora

i. Diaspora

Diaspora refers to the settling of the Jews among various non-Jews communities after they had been exiled in 538 B.C. The concept of diaspora goes back to human history. The term was initially used by the ancient Greeks to describe their spreading all over the then known world. It is the term that was initially used to refer to the diaspora of Jewish people across the globe. So, diaspora refers to the Jews who scattered after Babylonian captivity and in the modern period to Jews leaving outside of Palestine and latterly Israel. For them the concept of diaspora implies a traumatic exile from historical homeland and dispersal through out many lands. They try to create cultural form of their own. The concept of forming one's own culture in an alien land is a special feature of diaspora.

One of the definition of diaspora in the sixth edition of *Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary* of current English is "the movement of Jewish people away from their own country to live and work in other countries" (347). Within cultural studies, the term is used to describe a dynamic network of communities without the stabilizing allusion to an original homeland or essential identity. Diaspora has been used in the studies of race and ethnicity to describe a race of cultural affiliations connecting the groups dispersed voluntarily or involuntarily across national borders.

The term with the transformation of time has also extended now to include the descendents of diasporic movements generated by colonialism. They have developed their own distinctive cultures, which both reserve and often extend and develop their

originary cultures. Observing diaspora from this stand point critic Thomas Blom Hansen views diaspora as, "The term 'diaspora' not only transmits a certain sense of shared destiny and predicament, but also an inherent will to preservation and celebration of the ancestral culture and equally inherent impulse toward forging and maintaining link with the 'old country'" (12).

To live in diaspora is to experience the trauma of rootlessness and the life in a minority group haunted by some sense of loss, some urge to reclaim, to look back. As Rushdie in this regard says, "I have been in a minority group all my life a member of an Indian Muslim family in Bombay, then Mohajir-migrant-family in Pakistan and now as a British Asian ... creating an 'Imaginary Homeland' and willing to admit, though imaginatively, that s/he belongs to it" (4).

In general, many writers have adopted the notion of the diasporic identity as a positive affirmation of their hybridity. According to Radha Krishan, in the diaspora, immigrants suppress their ethnicity in the name of pragmatism and initially, then assimilate activity hiding their distinct ethnicity to be successful in the new world and lastly seeks the hyphenated integration of ethnic identity with national identity. It relates the idea of uprooting of migrants from their societies and cultures of origin, and thereby filling into them a sense of alienation, as do displacement, and dislocation.

People in diaspora are culturally displaced and forced into exile accepting plural and partial identity. They are always haunted by a sense of loss rootlessness. Diaspora is not infertile to occupy in spite of that diasporic people feel to be torn apart between root culture and adopted culture and the ground to be shifting and ambiguous. As Hall says:

The diaspora experience ... is defined, not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity, by a conception of 'identity' which lives with an through, not despite, difference; by hybridity. Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves a new, through transformation and difference. (69-70)

Thus, the notion of a 'diasporic identity' has been adopted by many writers as a positive affirmation of their hybridity. Identity is much debated when it is in crisis. The home country and the country of residence/adopted would become merely 'ghostly' locations, and the result can only be a double depolarization. Whatever being argued about diaspora, the concept diaspora is aptly used to describe dispersed intellectuals, expatriates or exiles.

ii. Jewish Diasproa

Diaspora has a number of meanings but originally it refers to the dispersion of Jewish almost 4000 years ago. One of the most crucial elements behind the concept of diaspora is immigration. According to the *Random House Dictionary*, there are multiple meanings of diaspora. Its first meaning is the scattering of the Jews to countries outside of Palestine after the Babylonian captivity (597-338 BCE). It has also second meaning which refers to those Jews who live outside of Palestine, or modern day Israel. And it's third meaning indicates the desire to return to Israel/Palestine from outside countries where Jews live. So, it clearly shows that the basic meaning of diaspora is the dispersion of the Jews throughout the world. But, it does not always refer to only Jews but all the people throughout the world who are far from their homeland.

So we talk about Jewish diaspora, we don't have to forget talking about Palestine and Babylonia. Palestine was the center of gravity of Jewish life. Originally it was the place from where Jews were chased away to Babylonia. Diaspora for Jewish people became heart-touching word with the fall of Jerusalem and Judea. At first diasporic Jewish went to Babylonia and then went to live in many other countries mostly into Asia Minor and Persia. while scattering from country to country. Some of them went to Egypt. So in Egypt, there emerged a large Greek speaking Jewish colony. Even the Bible was translated into Greek at the time. So, the largest and most important Jewish settlement in the diaspora was in Egypt.

Egypt was supposed to be one of the literary centers of Jews. Poem, play and drama were composed during this period by diasporic Jews, though it was not enough popular in Palestine and Rome. There was a great war between Jewish diaspora and the Romans. Romans were Christian so Church councils restricted the Jews from reading the Bible. The Church considered the Jews as the enemies of God. When Roman Empire broke down, they continued to spread to all parts of Europe. Likewise Jewish diaspora in Germany, France, Italy, England, Poland, Russia and so on are the examples of the Jews.

As it has already been defined the very term diaspora refers to , in a specific sense that of the exile of the Jews from the Holy-Land and their dispersal throughout several parts of the globe. Nowadays, it does not cover only Jews but other as well.

William Safran in *Israel Studies* says:

It developed a set of institutions, social patterns, and ethnonational and/or religious symbols that held in together. These included the language, religion, values, social norms and narrative of the homeland. Gradually, this community adjusted to the hostland environment and

became itself a center of cultural creation. All the while, however, it continued to cultivate the idea of return to the homeland. (10: 36)

Not only Jewish diaspora, there might be Chinese diaspora, American diaspora, Indian diaspora and so on if these communities have got such a situation. Among all the diasporas, the Jews are the oldest diaspora since they lacked homeland for the millennia. The very homeland is the ethnoscape of reference and the focus of what has been called long-distance nationalism. Many people have different eyes to look at Jewish diaspora from different angle and views. Jewish diaspora continues to be used as prototype because it combines such features as ethnicity, religion, minority status, a consciousness of peoplehood and along history of migration.

As we have known that many communities have various diasproic features and each one differs slightly from one to another. Though diasporas have been subject to several relocation from primary to secondary homelands, it is interesting to note that the Jewish diaspora was more Cohesive and lasted longer under authoritarian regimes of East and West European countries. One of the unique features of the Jewish diaspora is delocalization which is associated with Jewish nation building. Nation building is said to be the homeland and reestablishment of Israel was to provide a heaven for persecuted diasproa Jews. So, one of the most characteristic aspects of diaspora is their transpolitical linkage to the homelaned. People returning from the diaspora to the homeland also brought with them elements of the hostland cultures. But the cultures what they brought to the homeland might not be good totally and nor also bad totally. Some of them like language, religious and traition should help people to exchange their ideas and feelings. Moreover, people returning from diaspora might themselves bring unfitable habits like theft, drugs or not obeying the own's culture. Although diaspora people have such feeling of love and patriotism

towards their homeland what others have. It is because that the connection and disconnection between hostland and homeland are contextual and episodic. That's why the relationship between Jews in the diaspora and the homeland remains stronger than that which obtains in the case of most other comparable groups.

Hence, diaspora is mainly attached to Jews. we can not avoid this term from the Jews. That's why diaspora has had a specific meaning historically for Jews. For them, it has also connoted a continuing sense of insecurity.

The Jews are the oldest diaspora who lacked their homeland for two million. If one is away from the homeland, then he/she may feel unpleasant, and traumatic. Reason behind feeling of traumatic might be more than it is said and described. Diaspora people feel traumatic not only because they lost the homeland but more than that is they lost their religion, dress, customs, language, identity and originality. That's why people feel all these because they have lack of these things. And it is only because they have been dislocated. Dislocation is the outcome of willing or unwilling or unwilling movement from known to unknown location. Dislocation in many cases exists within the country and people who are chased away within the Nepal by the Maoist and Government are the real example of it.

Next one point connected with the Jews is alienation. we can't avoid this very alienation from the Jewish people. It is a term which refers to the estrangement of individuals from one another. so, it is said to be a loss of the cultural belonging. Because of all those causes, traumatic feeling comes time to again it is because that present is always guided by the past. And the past of Jews is to loss homeland. And then they want to seek the lost homeland i.e. their wish to returning in the homeland.

No doubt, because of dislocation, alienation and self frustration create crisis in identity in the life of people. Talking identity crisis about Jews is again related with

the word dispersion. Every person's main identity is language, religion, tradition and habits as well. If person goes out of it, then his/her identity comes under crisis. This is the case happened with the Jews. Jews homeland's language, religion and culture become disappear because of hostland's culture.

Chapter 3

Treatment of Identity Crisis in *Shosha*

Shosha: A Brief Outline

I.B. Singer's novel *Shosha* was first published in 1979. It is set in Poland between the two World Wars. It gives the history of the Jews in Warsaw, Poland. This novel has been divided into two parts. Part one contains from chapter one to chapter seven. Likewise, part two contains from chapter eight to chapter fourteen. And at the end of the novel, there is Epilogue as well.

Aaron, who was a figure in Hebrew history first mentioned in the Bible, is the narrator of the novel *Shosha*. He is diasporic Jew and the narrator through which Singer wants to show cultural identity and its crisis among the Jewish community and country. Part one starts with an autobiography of narrator, Aaron, himself. He says:

Although my ancestors had settled in Poland some six or seven hundred years before I was born, I knew only a few words of the Polish language. We lived in Warsaw on Krochmalna Street, which might well have been called a ghetto. Actually the Jews of Russian-occupied Poland were free to live wherever they chose. (*Shosha* 9)

Aaron goes on telling his childhood activities of playing with Shosha. When he becomes mature, he joins in the Writer's Club as a proofreader in Warsaw. He makes an affair with Dora there. Later on he makes friendship with Dr. Morris, Haiml and his wife Celia. With the help of Dr. Morris, he gets chance to make relation with Sam and Betty who are American. He is introduced as a writer. So, Sam and Betty want him to write a play for them. The subject matter of the play is based on 'The Maide From Ludmir' who studies and preaches the Torah.

Aaron has now a maid Tekla who serves him making food and managing the room. He passes his time guffing with the women and completing the novel as well. Haiml also listens Aaron writing about novel and encourages Aaron to write for a Yiddish theater. Feeling of Diaspora can be found when Betty asks him to take her Krochmalna Street. He says to her: "that street is completely bound up with my youth. For you, it won't be anything more than a dirty slum" (68). This shows the feeling of ownness and love for the land. While visiting at Krochmalna Street, Aaron along Betty happens to meet with Shosha and her family members. Betty suspects him falling in love with Shosha. But really Aaron not only does love with Shosha, he makes relation with his maid Tekla as well.

There comes the rehearsal of play but gets failed because of difficult Yiddish words. Now Aaron feels frustration and crisis in his personal identity as well. He realizes that the failure was his own fault. Betty even reveals the secrecy to Dr. Morris that Aaron is in love with Shosha. She says to Mr. Morris: "He could have remained a bachelor, but he found such a treasure – her name is Shosha – that he had to break all his principles and convictions"(125). At the end of the part one, Aaron really reveals his loves with Shosha. He says that he loved her as a child and he was never able to forget her.

Part two starts with the description of Jewish festival Yom Kippur. The apartment on Krochmalna Street of Warsaw reflects the Jewry of western European Jews and the religion itself. Shosha's mother does ritual practices even Sam calls Aaron on this occasion and purposes him to marry Betty. Sam promises him to take in America. Even he talks about Shosha that they would also bring her over to America and cure her. Sam forces Aaron to say whether he marries Betty or not. if not then he

says that God helps him. It dislocates Aaron identity is in crisis. And his crisis denotes to whole Jews crisis.

Shosha's "mother Bashele sets the date for the wedding-the week of Hanukkah, a Jews festival. In course of conversation with Tekla, Aaron says that bad times are coming for Jews and when the Nazis come, the Jews will be the first victim. Aaron's beloved Dora attempts suicide by drinking iodine but it's failure. Later on Dora congratulates Aaron for his marriage. Then after there comes Betty too with flowers in her hand. For the first time, Dora and Betty meet to each other. Dr. Morris also praises Shosha's childish beauty. He advises Tsutsik that *Shosha* is more beautiful than that of American actress Betty. Their marriage life brings happiness and love making situation based on Jewish culture.

Haiml, time to again gives view about Jews. He further says "Jews were perhaps the only group that played with words and ideas instead of with swords and guns. According to Jewish legend, when Messiah came, Jews would go to the land of Israel not on a mental bridge but on the made of paper" (221). This shows diasporic feeling of the Jews even now remembering the homeland Israel.

Betty, after returning from America, meets to Aaron and tells the death of Sam as well. She asks Aaron all about his marriage life. She even says aaron that Hitler would come to march in Poland. It would be better to rush from here. She mean that she even wants to take Aaron to America. But he denies going with her. Now onwards, their relation gets ended as well.

Even though it is written in Epilogue part that Aaron spent 13 years in America. After coming in Warsaw again, he meets to Haiml. Both of them seriously talk about the death of Dr. Morris, Celia, Shosha, and Betty. In course of talking with Aaron, Haiml says that the Jews were herded into the ghetto in October of 1940,

which was more than a year after the German came in. This indicates German's attacks on Poland. He further says: "God wanted Jews to seize the land of Israel from the Canaanites and wage wars against the Philistines, but the real Jews, who began to be what he is in exile" (245). Haiml is a person who tells real situation of Jews in Poland. He clarifies the fact that the newcomers are all out of their minds-victims of Hitler." In the end of the epilogue, Haiml becomes confuse of existence of God but Jews believe on God not death. This fragmented situation shows the identity crisis of Jews. And this situation of identity crisis is to be shown in further study.

Sense of Diasporic Feeling

I.B. Singer is Polish-born American novelist, short story writer and essayist who won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1978. Singer's chief subject is the traditional polish life in various periods of history before the Holocaust. He has especially examined the role of Jewish faith and culture in the lives of his characters, who are presented as culturally fragmented. They show their interest in magic and religious devotion as well. Diaspora always has a sense of exile and feels culturally displaced. These people often live in the space between the old world from where they had come from and the new world where they are trying to create their own identity. The concept of forming their own culture in an alien land is a special feature of diaspora. So, due to this awareness of being in a different culture and the consciousness of cultural root creates a diasporic feeling and experience. As a diasporic writer, Singer has strongly presented sense of diasporic feeling of Eastern European Jews and mainly of Jews in Poland.

Aaron Greidinger, who is the narrator and mouthpiece of Singer's novel *Shosha* has expressed such diasporic feeling in the novel. He says: "Although my ancestors had settled in Poland some six or seven hundred years before I was born, I

knew only a few words of the Polish language" (9). This saying powerfully represents the sense of diaspora. Even today, Singer, by representing Aaron as his mouth piece, wants to remember dispersion of his ancestors.

Mostly all the characters have felt the feeling of diaspora here in the novel. Haiml is another main character of the novel who is always haunted by the feeling of diaspora. Whenever he meets Aaron, he does not forget talking about it. He strongly puts his ideas that Jews, mostly European Jews, never forget Palestine since they passed near about two thousand years in Palestine. He charges those conservative Zionists who damnly want to forget it and simply assimilate the present situation. To clarify his point he further says, "Our Conservative Zionists have renounced the diaspora. All good fortune, they say, will come about Palestine. But let's not forget that Palestine was only our cradle. We should have grown up in those two thousand years. By ignoring the exile they help bring out assimilation" (62).

Aaron, in this novel is not only narrator but also playwright as well. He composes a play entitled "The Maidan from Ludmir." It is the play about 19th century woman who used to study Torah and lived in Jerusalem. Betty from America, wants to act in this play. So, she asks Aaron:

Why don't you write in an affair for her? If a woman like that fell in love, it would create a strong conflict.

Yes, that's an idea worth considering.

Have her fall in love with a non-Jew, a Christian.

A Christian? That couldn't be. (33)

This means that feeling of diaspora, originality and love to culture is even an important element of Jews wherever they scatter. Aaron even now has a strong

sympathy upon Jewish tradition that Jews women should not fall in love with non-Jews.

Dispersion might occur from one place to another place within a country. This sense of dislocation even inside the countries seen in Aaron. Aaron has expressed his feeling of alienation after he always from his childhood friend Shosha on Krochmalna Street in Warsaw. When they were at the age of child they used to play together. When his parent moved to a village occupied by the Austrians from Warsaw then their friendship also got ended. But when he is at the age of 20, he remembers the incident and says:

We played jacks, knucklebones, hide and seek, husband and wife. I made believe I went to the synagogue and when I returned Shosha prepared a meal for me. Once a played the role of a blind man and Shosha let me touch her forehead, cheeks, mouth. She kissed the palm of my hand and said, 'Don't tell Mama. (12)

Everyone is haunted by the past and the very past generates the present. Jews are the actual diaspora people in general chased away from Palestine almost 4000 years ago. So this kind of feeling and sense of alienation can be found in the writings of Jewish writers, and those of the characters. Such situation can also be found here in *Shosha* as well. Because of scattering and dispersion from Palestine, many of them settled in Europe mainly in Eastern European countries. Poland is one of those countries where most of the Jews are living now. But time and again, they are threatened. They were even chased away during the period of World War. This novel *Shosha* is set before the world war II. That is why, Aaron the main character of the novel, forecasts his views in term of this situation. He further says: "The Jews in Poland are trapped and we will all be destroyed" (121). Why does Aaron from the side

of writer raise this type of issue is to make aware the European Jews that they will again be dispersed away from Poland. Sense of dispersion from Palestine is to be seen again which also became true due to World War II. Nazi Germany, mainly Hitler, gave much torture to the Jews of Poland during the time of war. Thousands of European Jews were killed and many more became homeless again. Dr. Morris is a philosopher whose saying even gets matched since holocaust emerged with the arrival of Hitler. So in course of talking with Aaron, Dr. Morris says: "Tsutsik, don't stay in Poland. A holocaust is coming here that will be worse than in Chmieltsky's time. If you can get a visa even a tourist visa-escape ! A good holiday" (140).

As mentioned above, Singer has minutely talked about the war between the Jews and the Nazi. He even gives hint of it for the Jews. That's why before the war, they have assumed that they will again be victimized and scattered. This event can be proved from the conversation between Aaron and his maid Tekla. He says: "When the Nazis come, the Jews will be the first victims" (160). It clearly clarifies the fact that polish Jews are very much horrified of their second dispersion so they are bound to feel alienation and diasporic trauma as their forefathers had faced.

To make the Jews aware, many Jewish parties and clubs had been opened in Warasaw. All those claimed themselves to be a good one. Among them was the club of the Revisionists which encouraged Jews to learn acts of terror against the English so that they could restore Palestine. Likewise, there was another club entitled "The Club of the Left-wing" which believed that "only when the proletariat seized power, would the Jews be able to have their own homeland in Palestine and become a socialistic nation" (171). All these clubs and parties gave diasporic Jews so much sense of alienation that love and devotion increased for the homeland.

Sense of Frustration and Fragmentation

People need good environment and good background to promote themselves in making the process of development. Here environment refers to cultural educational, political situation in the society or country. Among them cultural environment is the most important thing which guides people to their own personality, identity and nationality. If people are away from all those things, then there comes some sort of dislocation which leads to frustration and fragmentation. The term frustration refers to the state of being upset and it prevents somebody from doing or achieving something in life. It shows disappointment and lack of confidence. Likewise, fragmentation refers to the disintegration of the whole into parts. It is said to be incomplete part and far away from the root. These all happen only because of the change of culture. If one is far away from his/her root culture, society and homeland, then he/she may follow other cultures or that person may feel alienation and isolation. Because of the alienation, there will be frustration and confusion. Frustration and fragmentation might be occur when one is not satisfied with his/her work and in the situation when personal desire can not be fulfilled. How it has been occurred in the life of Eastern European Jews and especially to those of the characters in *Shosha* is to be shown in the further study.

Frustration

Aaron is the narrator, writer, lover and the main protagonist of the novel. He works in the Writer's Club in Warsaw as a proofreader. He is a man of multi dimensional personality. He represents not only Jews of Poland but represents European Jews as well. Singer has presented him in this novel such a way that we cannot go far away from him. As it has already been mentioned that Aaron works at the Writer's Club so he has taken rented room in Warsaw. It is very much difficult to

earn enough money as a proofreader. He doesn't manage to have good room because of this situation. So, he feels frustration and sad. And his feeling of Sadness can be categorized from the following lines:

I had sublet a room from a family who now wanted to be rid of me.
More than once when people telephoned me they were told that I was out even though I was right there in my room. In order to go to the bathroom, had to go walk through the living room, and the door to this room was often locked at night. I had been planning to move for weeks but hadn't found a room for the little rent I could pay. (28)

Aaron is frustrated. He often writes stories, articles but his main work is proofreading. Being a reputed writer, he has not even published his books. So, he feels ashamed. Every writer wants not only to write but also to publish the articles as well, but it does not come ever true, which makes them upset. Aaron too feels such and says: "what kind of writer was I? I hadn't published a single book" (29). This notion clarifies the fact that he has felt the feeling of hesitation and frustration. And this frustration can be connected with dislocation of the homeland since he does not feel comfortable here.

Sam and Betty have come to Warsaw from America to have a play on the stage. Aaron is given the work of writing the play but Sam charges that his play does not fit for the public. Everyone has known that Aaron's play is soon to be staged. For that, he has been given money for writing the play. At last, Sam refuses staging his play just saying that it is unfit. Because of this, Aaron becomes so upset. He says: "At this time, the logic of my pride was that nothing remained to me but to hide from all those involved with me and my profession" (111). How he has felt ashamed is clearly to be seen. People commit suicide when they face such situation. Aaron also says: "I considered suicide" (111). The term suicide itself is the sign of frustration. He realizes

his failure for not completing the play is his own fault. It is because he goes for meeting Shosha instead of writing play.

The main character Aaron is in love not only with a single woman but with multiple of women. But at last, he marries Shosha, his childhood friend. Every woman desires baby after the marriage, so is the case with Shosha too. Shosha's mother once talking with Aaron, says that would be baby should be like Aaron but not Shosha. Aaron and Bashile further say:

'Mother, we won't have any children.

'Why not? Heaven wants there to be a world and Jews.'

'No one knows what heaven wants. If God had wanted the Jews to live, he wouldn't have created Hitler. (178)

The conversation between Shosha's mother and Aaron shows the fact that European Jews, mainly of Jews in Poland were so frightened of Nazi Hitler.

Fragmentation

Most of the characters in *Shosha* feel fragmented more or less. Jewish character feel so. Mainly these Jewish characters represent the Jews of Poland and Eastern European Jews in the whole. They are fragmented in terms of belief, culture, love and so on. As it has already been mentioned in thesis proposal that why I .B. Singer presents characters in such a way is to be shown now.

After dispersion of Jews from Palestine to European countries and rest of the countries, fragmentation took place in every aspect of their life. Aaron is not only just protagonist of the novel but a writer too. He starts writing a novel entitled *The Madien from Ludmir* which is about Jewish woman. According to Jewish culture, talking about sex is not allowed but while writing the play, Aaron says: "Should I add love and sex to this play" (43). This clearly shows the fact that Jewish culture became

fragmented more or less. Even Dr. Morris advises Aaron that today's Jews like three things - - sex, Torah, and revolution, all mixed together. Mixture of these three could be found in *Shosha*. It is said to be a sign of fragmentation. And this fragmentation is not only the fragmentation of Jews of Poland but of all European Jews. According to Jews culture, Torah is a holy book like Ramayan and Mahabharat. And in Jews culture, they are not allowed to talk about sex. But in *Shosha*, it has been clearly described romance and sexual relationship of Aaron with among all the female characters. This shows not only the fragmentation of Jews of Poland but of all European Jews. It is because the main character Aaron does not represent only polish Jews but represents to all European Jews.

Betty has come to Warsaw with Sam just for acting, and Sam is supposed to be called Betty's lover though he is already married. On the other hand, Aaron has made relationship with many female characters and it is true that he would marry Shosha later. But here it is necessary to see the controversy and fragmented talking between Betty and Aaron. Aaron agrees to marry Betty. So, she says: "I know that you have a mother and a brother, but this can't be put off. If things go well, we'll bring your family over to America" (148). Later on we come to know that Aaron neither marriage Betty nor Betty's promise of taking Aaron's family to America is completed. Incomplete part of love affair between them is the most striking example of fragmented situation in the novel *Shosha*.

It is to be questioned why there is fragmented love in *Shosha*. There are so many seen and unseen causes behind this very fragmented love. Aaron is the main character with whom most of the female characters have affair. One of the characters, Dr. Morris, says that today's Jews like sex, Torah and revolution. It is because of this open concept, may be, Aaron falls in love and keeps sexual relation with them. And

this sexual relation brings fragmentation in love. Likewise lack of belief is another cause of fragmented love. They know each other that they are in love with a single hero Aaron at the same time. Falling in love with a single male creates a sense of lack for them. And it has resulted into fragmented love. Situation of women characters in the novel is quite confusing. For example, Haiml and Celia are husband and wife and in the same way Betty and Sam are lovers. On the other hand, both of these women are in love with Aaron. This shows that they don't have fixed-stand point and it is also the cause of fragmentation in love. In one sense, it is because of the mixture of cultures and feeling of diaspora as well.

Among the characters brought in *Shosha*, Singer has presented Betty, an American actress, in such a way that others are not so fragmented. After Aaron marries Shosha, she again comes to Warsaw and persuades him to go America with her. Still she is madly in love with Aaron. Her mind is so fragmented that it leads her to come again in Warsaw. When Betty knows that Aaron loves Shosha more than her, then she is so fragmented and immediately says: "that means you're ready to give up your life for her" (230). She hopes to convince him but gets failed. This clearly shows that she is mentally fragmented only because of Aaron.

Jews believe in only one God. They don't believe on life after death. But today's Jews are more open. They are not sure of only one God. They are in confusion and this very confusion creates contradiction and fragmentation in them. At the end of the novel, Haiml talks this matter with Aaron. He says: "If God is wisdom, how can there be foolishness? And, if God is life, how can there be death? I lie at night, a little man, a half-squashed fly, and I talk with the death, with the living, with God- if he exists – and with Satan, who certainly does exist" (250). This clarifies the fact that fragmentation and contradiction could be seen in *Shosha*.

Above all the situations lead us to say that main characters in *Shosha* are mainly fragmented in terms of love. And this fragmentation in love somehow creates cultural alienation in the life of characters. Most of the characters in *Shosha* are from Jewish community. Aaron, Shosha, Haiml and Dr. Morris are Polish Jews characters who always talk about their ancestors and lost homeland, Palestine. Likewise, Sam and Betty are American. They are in Warsaw now and want to follow the culture of Poland just forgetting their own culture. These all female characters are in love with Aaron. And their love with Aaron is mainly to get sexual satisfaction except in the case of Shosha. This type of passion of Aaron and female characters force them to have love with each other. But at last, it results in separation and fragmentation. This is fragmentation in love in the novel *Shosha*. No doubt, there is somehow connection between fragmentation in love and cultural alienation. People become culturally alienated when they are far away from their original culture. So far concerned characters in the novel *Shosha*, they are culturally alienated in original since their forefathers dispersed and now are in Poland. Feeling of dispersion always haunt them that they have been alienated from their original culture. Because of this feeling there comes fragmentation in their mind. What mind thinks people always do that. Most of the characters' mind in the novel is fragmented because of alienation. So they don't have fixed stand and start doing love to each other. And feeling of alienation results in fragmented love.

Cultural Rituals in *Shosha*

Ritual is a system with which religious ceremony is systematized traditionally. It can also be said with series of actions used in a religious ceremony. None is far away from his/her own rituals even if it is in the process of change in terms of time and place. Every community and religious group has its own rituals and tradition. It

differs from community to community or religion to religion. Ritual comes under the study of culture which refers to the overall life style of people. So far as the position of Jewish culture and ritual in *Shosha* is concerned it can be examined here:

Krochmalna Street is the place where old traditional things were found. There was a prayer home for the Jews in which "Jews still come here to pray" (70). Once, Aaron goes there with Betty. He has grown up, 'they are overcome by the sinful urge to thrust their head inside. And then, they can desecrate the Torah by kissing one another. It symbolizes the loss of faith. In Jewish religion, kissing at pray house is not allowed. Likewise, Dr. Morris says his view about fasting that Jews keep on wishing themselves for a eternal life. Regarding this, Aaron has a little bit different view on worshipping and fasting. He doesnot regard it as a will of god but he worships because he wants to keep family tradition. He further says: "I was fasting not because I believed that this was God's will, but to remain in some way a part of my family and all the other Jews" (133). This shows that I.B. Singer has demonstrated a slight change in Jewish tradition with the help of Aaron.

Yom Kippur is one of the famous ceremonies for Jewish people. It remains two days and *Shosha's* mother buys two hens to perform the sacrificial ceremony. One could hear the clucking of hens coming from all the apartments of Krochmalna Street. It shows that old people always like to follow the rituals and they think God becomes happy after doing ritual activities.

Marriage between Aaron and *Shosha* also takes place in the week of Hanukkah. Hanukkah is one of the most famous festivals of Jews. And this date is fixed by *Shosha's* mother. All these above factors show the fact that cultural rituals celebrated by the Jews in this novel are somehow traditional though they are in the

process of changing as well. Some sorts of change in rituals can be found in the characters.

Cultural ritual represents people's feeling and faith. It symbolizes people's origin from where they are and who they are. There can be found such cultural rituals as mentioned above in the novel. When people are far away from their homeland then such rituals and traditional faith always haunt them. So as in the novel is concerned. Aaron, Shosha and her family members basically her mother represent typical traditional norms of members of Jewish culture and tradition. Most of the characters in the novel Shosha are the generation of diasporic Jews. Now they belong to Polish Jews but they always remember their tradition and perform it as well. It shows the fact that even diaspora people have a feeling of cultural rituals, although it gets slightly changed because of alien culture. So, it also shows the hint that diasporic Jews are hungry of getting their lost land and they also want to preserve their original religion and culture. Their attempt and awareness of preserving culture can be found here in the novel. Many ritual practices in the novel are to be linked with this issue. Marriage between Aaron and *Shosha* is one of the burning examples of it. Aaron gets married to Shosha only because of keeping his culture alive. As same way, Shosha's mother keeps on worshipping traditional Jewish values and norms. These all show that they are also aware of their culture.

Identity Crisis of Characters in Shosha

Identity has become the central area of concern in cultural studies these days 1990s. Identity is the process how we describe ourselves to each other. Likewise identity is the meaning of self- -concept that one gives to oneself or the meaning in general that human beings give to themselves. The question of identity has always been a difficult one. It is even more difficult for culturally displaced person who

leaves his native land. It is because the notion of identity is bound up with the expression of culture. People the host country try to cope with the new culture, yet nostalgia exists in them. And the duality results in identity crisis. This is what one part of identity crisis that should be analyzed. Identity crisis in Shosha refers to crisis of character's identity in terms of language, personal matters, relation, mentality, physicality and so on.

Aaron is the main character in the novel. He is also the narrator. Being a narrator, he has not been called by that name by anyone, rather he has been called by Tsutsik and Arele as well. He has got more than one name in the novel. That's why whether he is Aaron or Tsutsik or Arele is in question. But we may come to a point that his multiple names really create multivalence of his behaviours and characters. Because of this nature, he has lust with many women characters in the novel. Likewise multiple names suggest a sense of fragmentation. As real name is not fixed in the same way his real identity has been fragmented. That is why there is crisis in his personal identity because of multiple names. It also creates multiplicity in his identity. When he meets with Celia and Haiml, he does not even mention his name. And after a while Celia says: "I have a name for him – Tsutsik. That's what I'll call him from now on" (27). This shows that his real identity and real name is unknown. He has even got real name that has been replaced too. From the first time when Celia calls him, he is known as Tsutsik in the novel. But this name is again in crisis when he happens to meet with Betty and Sam with the help of Mr. Morris. Betty and Sam are from America to have a play in Warsaw. At the time of meeting with Betty and Sam, Dr. Morris introduces him as a young writer in front of them.

Sam, time and again, calls him 'young man'. But what a surprise ! he does not say his name that Celia has given to him. Sam and Betty are very much eager to

know his name even if he does not introduce himself by the name. Sam now asks his name "Come along young man. What's your real name?" (30). Then he says: "Aaron Greidinger" (30). This is the situation of crisis in identity particularly in the case of characters. Sam calls him young man since he does not know his name. Later on he knows. But it is Aaron who should introduce himself saying his name first.

Aaron goes with Betty to Krochmalna Street where he was brought up. He meets there his former neighbours and childhood friend Shosha. He recognizes Shosha's mother Bashele and says: "you don't recognize me, but I recognize you" (73). She also recognizes him at once. She further says: "I do recognize you. You're Arele" (73). In this way, the narrator of the novel possesses multiple of names which create multiplicity in his identity. Likewise, his identity is in crisis in terms of relation as well. He himself says: "In all the novels I had read, the heroes desired only one woman, but here I was, lusting after the whole female gender" (83). This clearly shows the fact that he has made relation not only with one female character in the novel but with almost all. Now, it is in question that where his identity lies.

Aaron, as known as Tutsik, first makes his relation with Shosha when he was child but this was pious and true. When he becomes young and mature he falls in love with Dora. Aaron himself clarifies the fact and says further:

In Warsaw, I began an affair with Dora Stolnitz, a girl whose goal was to settle in Soviet Russia, the land of socialism. I learned later that she was a functionary of the Communist Party. She had been arrested several times and spent months in Pawiak and other prisons. I was anti-Community, anti-all 'isms-but I live in construct fear of being arrested and imprisoned because of my connection with this girl, whom I later

began to dislike for her hollow slogans and bombastic clichés about the 'happy future', the bright tomorrow. (20)

Above mentioned ideas give clear cut idea that it is Aaron who dislikes just for escaping from her to go away to next person. This is because of frustration which leads Dora closer to commit suicide. The relation still continues even if Aaron makes next relation with Celia, wife of Haiml. His relation with Celia is physical. Aaron has no stand point and his stand is in crisis because of this immoral relationship. His immoral relationship with Celia can be put forwards when we see what Aaron says: "I expected kissed the moment I came in, an immediately physical intimacy. But her expression told me that she was in no mood for this" (57). This is why he goes on changing love from one female to another.

Likewise, Aaron starts loving Betty. He is the playwright and Betty plans to act in his play. When he meets Betty and in process of talking, she offers him having a smoke. Actually he does not have habit of smoking but he takes it since he has crisis in habit as well. It is proved what he says, "She offered me a cigratee. I didn't smoke but I wouldn't think of refusing her. She brought me a lighter. I took one puff and became intoxicated by the aroma" (46). Habit comes under the study of culture and it sometimes determines person's identity as well. So, the above saying of Aaron shows the fact that his identity became fragmented here too, when Betty time and again asks him to go America with her. And in response he says: "Betty, Shosha would die if I did this to her" (47). Even now he is in confusion about what to do. This confusion creates his mental crisis. He does not have actual idea and authentic vision about life. He is trapped in both. That is his own polish culture and adopting of American culture. Neither he can leave *Shosha* nor he can give clear decision to Betty. In one sense, we can say that he is attracted towards both. Hence, attraction

towards both is a sign of fragmentation and crisis of personal decision power. And this very personal decision power is in crisis because of cultural conflict in mentality. His relation with Betty and Celia has not finished yet. When he starts writing a play, he lives in a new place called Leszno Street. He has given the household work to Tekla. Aaron is a writer but his identity is so fragmented that he even makes illegal relationship with her. He is a man of double identities. But these double folding identities sometimes put a person in dangerous crisis.

Aaron has made relation with all those above female characters in the novel and with Shosha, his childhood friend. When they were child, they had friendly relation but it ended when his family moved from the Krochmalna street. When Aaron goes to the Krochmalna street with Betty after twenty years he then happens to see Shosha and her family members. Memories of those childish activities once come ahead of them. Now, Aaron is haunted by the memories and then he starts loving her though other female characters are in touch more or less with him.

Now it has become time to analyze and evaluate those female characters in brief with their social background. Main female protagonists in the novel are Betty, Celia, Shosha, Dora and Tekla. Their role in the novel and how their roles create crisis in their personal identity should be studied here.

Shosha is a female protagonist in the novel. Her family lives in Krochmalna Street of Poland. Her father, Zeliz, works in a leather store whereas her mother, Bashele is a housewife. It has been mentioned that her brain doesn't seem to be developing so that she speaks like a child of six though she is nine. She is the friend of Aaron from the childhood time. She is weak both physically and mentally. After many years, Aaron comments: "Shosha had neither grown nor aged. I did observe a slight change in her face and in her height" (74).

She is a fragile character and her actual identity depends on Aaron. She does not create her identity and without Aaron, her identity is in crisis. She says: "But if you went away now and didn't come back, I'd die a thousand deaths. I'll never leave you again" (98). This proves the fact that her whole life is based on him. She is a poor girl without any education. So, she does not get chance to stand herself nor she can able to create her identity in reality. After being married with Aaron, she is confirm herself whether she is married or not. She asks him: "Arele, am I a wife now?" (201). This is a quite confusing question which lies the feeling of fragmentation in the novel. As told before she is weak mentally. Her mental weakness can be found here in this line. She says: "Arele, I want to have a child with you, a little baby with blue eyes and red hair. The doctor said that if they cut up my belly a living child would come out" (205). This shows the fact that she is in mental crisis. Singer has presented Shosha in such a way to express his inner diasporic feeling through her. By presenting Shosha both mentally and physically weak, Singer wants to prove that Jewish people are suffering mental and physical problems because of dispersion. And it is Shosha who represents the diasporic feeling of Jewish community.

Betty Slonim is another leading character in the novel. She is an American actress who has come to Poland to appear in the Yiddish theater. She has got much popularity in America. So, now she wants to act on the stage of Poland. Actually, she is wealthy and attractive actress having bold nature. She belongs to Christianity. So, she asks Aaron to add something more about Christianity in the play. She has come to Warsaw with her old and married lover Sam Dreiman. Talking with Aaron, she says: "I'm not religious you see how I live-but I do believe in God. Before I go to sleep, I say a prayer" (48). It proves that she believes in God but now she is in confusion of it.

When Sam and Betty come to Warsaw for acting on the stage, they become familiar with Aaron. They even agree to act in the play of him. Like Celie, Betty too starts loving Aaron just forgetting her old lover Sam. This clearly shows that she has also not got fix identity. It is because of crisis in identity, she becomes so. She is so mad for him that she even forgets her own nationality. She says: "Sam wants me to return to America, but inspite of all my disappoints I fell in love with Warasaw. What would I do in America?" (120). This clearly shows the fact that Betty totally wants to forget her actual identity and nationality. Her identity becomes crisis in the Jews community. It is because she changes herself in the environment of Warsaw. She even involves in ritual practices with Aaron and Sam. She fells in love with Warsaw means compromises with its cultural aspects. When Aaron gets married to Shosha, she becomes so upset that she goes to America. She can't live there for a long time only because of Aaron and comes back. She is so fragmented that she always persuades him to go America with her. She says: "I can't go back to America all by myself. Between a yes and a no I could arrange a tourist Visa for you and you could go with me" (229). This shows that her happiness and identity lie on Aron. It does not become so the way she thinks. That's why, she commits suicide at the end.

As it has been mentioned in chapter one that Singer brought one of his major themes, the conflict between the religious and secular life. In *Shosha*, this conflict has played vital role in the life of characters and mainly in the life of Aaron. He is also in this duality. Why he does not marry to Betty is because of this reason. His mind becomes fragmented whether to marry Betty to support secular aspect or not to marry her to support religious aspect. The conflict plays within his mind. At last, he decides not to marry her since he is polish Jews and she is American. Likewise this novel is the struggle between modern and traditional modes of practice which refer to conflict

between the religious and secular life as well. It is also as an encounter of modernity and traditional Jewish world. It is because when Aaron takes Betty to visit a prayer house in the Krochmalna ghetto where he had grown up, they put their heads inside the ark and start kissing. This shows that Jewish people are in conflict between religious (traditional) and secular (modern) modes.

Another female character in the novel is Dora Stolnitz. She is a follower of the Communist Party and her goal is to settle in Soviet Russia, the land of socialism. She is Jewish character believing in Communism. Like the other female characters, she is in love with Aaron. Although she is the first beloved of Aaron, Dora's identity is in crisis in various ways. First of all, the relation between her and Aaron ends because of her wish for going Russia. She herself puts her identity in crisis because of misunderstanding. Though she could not go there because of treachery within the party. Dora cannot make good relation again with Aaron. She is in such a fragmented situation that she once attempts suicide by drinking iodine. Both of them are equally guilty of maintaining their relation. Aaron himself is fragmented character who never likes any 'isms' whether it is communism or socialism. But Dora believes in Communism. Of course, it is alien ideology which she accepts and it is also the main cause of separating their relation.

When she happens to meet with Aaron after a long time, she becomes so puzzled and says: "I thought you would never want to see my face again" (164). Now she becomes frustrated with her own life. She simply lives without involving in the party. She is neither in favour of party nor Aaron. That's why such situation leads her more into identity crisis. Her crisis and frustration can be noticed what she further says: "I'm afraid that my ex-comrades will turn me into the secret service" (170). This is how her situation in the novel is very pitiable.

Celia Chentshiner is another leading character in the novel. She is the wife of Haiml. She is an orphan and has been raised in Reb Gabriel's house, father of Haiml. And later she becomes daughter-in-law of that house. She is now over thirty. She is the woman having strong passion and emotion for sex. She is married woman and is in love with Aaron. So, it is easy to guess that her identity is in trap. Being a married woman, forgetting her marital status, she comes under identity crisis. She is so crazy with him and says: "I thought we were friends but if you prefer to remain aloof, of course that's your privilege. Still, I would like you to know I'm delighted for you" (55). From this statement we can assume that she has lost her marital status and identity. Her erotic emotion and fragmented situation becomes more clear when she further says: "Come for lunch today. Haiml went to his father's in Lodz. I'm all alone" (56). This clearly shows the fact that she is unfaithful to Haiml. As a married woman. She is not able to perform the role of wife. It is her identity crisis that leads her to do so.

Among all the male and female characters, Aaron is supposed to be the central character in the novel. He is shown as a moving character in the case of love making. He moves from one female to another. Why he moves from one to the another is very big question. I.B. Singer himself is a diasporic writer who has written his novel from the land of America. Since he is a diasporic writer, sense of dispersion automatic can be found in his writing. Aaron is the narrator and mouthpiece of Singer. So, Singer has presented all his feeling by the help of Aaorn.

From the very beginning of the novel, Aaron has remembered his ancestors who had scattered from Palestine and had settled in Poland. His ancestors' dispersion always haunts him and compels him to think of alienation and feeling of fragmentation. Because of the feeling of alienation and dispersion, his mind has

become fragmented and frustrated. Because of his fragmented mind, he moves from female to female. First, he moves to Dora, then Celia. Then he makes relation with Betty, his maid Tekla. At last, he falls in love with his childhood friend Shosha. His moving from one female to another clearly shows the fact that his mind is fragmented. He cannot control his mind. Next thing is that Singer wants to show how a person becomes rootless and identityless if he is far away from his homeland and his own original culture. To show fragmentation and frustration, the writer has created the central character moving from one to the another. And it is sure that fragmentation creates identity crisis.

Shosha and Aaron are childhood friend. Both of them also belong to Jewish culture. The main cause of their closeness is sameness in culture. He always feels diasporic and because of diasporic feeling, his mind has become fragmented. But when he happens to meet his childhood friend Shosha after a long time, he becomes so attracted that he could not stop loving her. It is only because of similarity in culture that he cannot leave Shosha afterwards.

Chapter 4

Conclusion

Isaac Bashevis Singer's novel *Shosha* basically gives the history of the Jews in Warsaw of Poland before the World War II. These Polish Jews and other Jews were exiled in 538 BC from their homeland, Palestine. The inevitability of the Holocaust and the utter powerlessness of the Jews in the face both of Polish anti-Semitism and of Hitler are taken for granted throughout the story. A sense of diasporic feeling is always found in their mind, and in the writings of the Jewish novelists like Singer. Singer himself is a diasporic writer who has written this novel from the land of America. Because of the diasporic feeling, there seems to be fragmentation, frustration, alienation and these very things bring crisis in culture. Culture creates identity of a person and community. It gives meaning to individuals, shapes human behaviour. When someone nurtured in one culture is placed in another, she/he may face cultural shock and the reaction may be anger, frustration and alienation.

Aaron, in the novel of I.B. Singer, *Shosha*, is the main character who strongly represents Jewish diaspora in two ways. First of all, he always remembers the lost homeland, Palestine, its culture and originality. He relates his identity and originality to those of the Jews who had settled in Poland some six hundred years before his birth. It gives a clear cut idea of the diasporic Jews' dislocation, alienation and isolation. Next thing is that dispersion might also occur within the country. We can see it in *Shosha* too. Diasporic feeling of Aaron is to remember the Krochmalna Street where he passed his childhood. By the help of Aaron, Singer wants to memorize ritual activities, ceremony and Jews' ghetto of the Krochmalna Street.

Singer's *Shosha* shows most of the characters in a fragmented and frustrated condition. The presence of love affairs among the characters in the novel has brought them in such a situation. Aaron, Dora, Celia, Tekla, Haiml and Betty are the main characters of the novel. And these women characters have love affairs with Aaron. Aaron is a single male character with whom they all are in love. Such a kind of situation certainly creates a sense of frustration and fragmentation in the life of characters. Most of the characters are Jews. So, this fragmentation and frustration can be related to the life of Eastern European Jews as well since Poland lies in Eastern Europe. After scattering of Jews from their homeland Palestine, they dispersed everywhere in Europe and mainly in Eastern Europe.

Love, which is both life and death, is clearly shown in this novel. Aaron is the main character with whom most of the female characters are in touch. Dora is Communist and he is anti-Communist. There comes a clash in love because of this reason. It is because of love, she wants to commit suicide. Frustration might be the cause of trying to commit suicide. It sometimes results into death. Sometimes, fragmentation in love brings frustration in the life of human beings. Celia does not perform her duty as a good wife. She has got married to Haiml even if she keeps a relation with Aaron. It is because of frustration in love, she also dies at the end of the novel. Likewise Betty, who is supposed to be a beloved of Sam, keeps a relation with Aaron as well. She strongly wants to take Aaron to America but gets failed. At the end of the novel, she also commits suicide since the situation is not in her favour. Shosha gets married to Aaron. Although she is weak both physically and mentally so she dies naturally which gives more support that the characters in the novel are fragmented themselves.

So far as the novel *Shosha* is concerned, most of the characters in the novel do not have stand point and identity because of fragmentation and frustration. Their identity is in crisis. We know that identity is directly related with culture. Culture often creates the identity of a person. Even if the question of identity has always been a difficult one, if a person does not have fixed point, sometimes he/she turns out his/her mind here and there and then gets confused. This situation surely brings crisis in identity. When one's identity is underestimated, then, there comes problems. And that problem creates crisis in identity which is generally known as identity crisis. That is why, identity crisis in *Shosha* refers to crisis of character's identity in terms of relation, personal matter and so on. All the characters' relation in the novel is quite confused.

In *Shosha*, the main character Aaron's identity is in crisis in various ways. He does not have even actual name, rather he has got multiple one. Thus multiplications of name do not create actual identity of a person. But it creates duality in identity. Aaron's identity is in crisis in terms of relation. At last, he gets married with *Shosha* but she dies leaving him behind. Not only the case of Aaron, Singer has trapped all the characters in this situation of crisis. Identity crisis is everywhere found in this novel. Celia is another important character whom Singer has presented more in dilemma. She is a married woman even if she gives up her marital identity and status falling in love with Aaron. So is the case with Betty too. She is in love with a married man Sam on the one hand. And on the other, she again loves Aaron. This is the crisis that Singer has shown her. She at last commits suicide and dies. Most of the characters in the novel feel identity crisis because they do not have their standpoint. The next reason is that they are interrelated to each other. Without one, the other is supposed to be incomplete. It is because Singer has brought one of his major themes,

the conflict between the religious and secular life. In *Shosha*, this conflict has played a vital role in the life of characters and mainly in the life of Aaron. Singer wants to show that Jewish people are in conflict between religious (traditional) and secular (modern) modes.

Likewise in Singer's *Shosha*, Shosha is another important character whom Singer has presented physically weak and fragmented. She is old in age but looks like a child. Her talking and childish like behaviour also shows as if she is a child. She only sees her existence and identity on Aaron. Even Aaron marries her at last. Both Aaron and Shosha are the characters from Jews community and mainly of Eastern European Polish Jews. Showing marriage between them, Singer tries to unite the Jews again into one.

Hence, Singer, in his famous novel *Shosha*, has presented all the characters in a fragmented and frustrated way. They do not have their actual stand point. Singer himself is a diasporic writer. So, he is well aware about the bitter experience of diasporic feeling. And this diasporic feeling results in his writing as frustration, fragmentation and alienation. His characters in the novel possess all these feelings. So, Singer shows most of them running here and there.

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