

**TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY**

**Woman as Evil: Jewish Male Ideology in Isaac  
Bashevis Singer's *Satan in Goray***

**A thesis submitted to the Central Department of English  
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### I. Introduction: Plight of Women in Goray

The representation of woman in *Satan in Goray* by Isaac Bashevis Singer reveals the mid-seventeenth century Polish Jews male ideology. Rechele, the main character of the novel, is portrayed as evil. Almost all female characters in the novel are presented in negative reference. Evil spirit encapsulated in Recchele causes heavy destruction one after another. The novel is set on the background on the havoc resulted from Chmelnicki Massacre in Goray. The destruction by Chmelnicki is not the end but the beginning. The striking point is that these all massacres are presented with their relation to Rechele. Rechele is a bad omen for Goray who caused several destructions from the Chmelnicki massacre to epidemics, draughts, horror and deaths. Goray never enjoys peace and prosperity until she is alive in Goray. People express that they have never experienced such dreadful situation. The Chmelnicki massacre, historically, is the case of 1648 and 1649 caused by Boden Chmelnicki who was an officer of Polish army earlier but deserted Polish and joined in Cossacks. So, periodical base of the novel is mid-seventeenth century. Singer has depicted the societal scenario of medieval Poland lively. He has introduced Goray as a small town inhabited by Jews.

Written at a time of troubles for the Jewish community in Poland, it draws the societal activities, norms and values of mid-seventeenth century. It is a book of literature, anthropology and history from which great understanding of medieval Jewish people may flow. In 1917 Singer had gone to live in his grandfather's home in the little Polish village of Bilgoray. He was there six years and this period had an enormously strong effect on him. For the first time Singer experienced *shtetl* life and met people who literally believed in magic, and whose superstitions dated from the middle age. This fascination with the past helps to understand why Singer makes

realistic depiction of Jewish society of middle age. It was also during his stay in Bilgoray that Singer began to read the past and present of Jewish society and its ideology widely. This contributed him to inscribe the realist depiction of medieval Poland. Female characters are accused of witch, evil and they do have a life of confinement, suppression and oppression. Rechele is a representative female character who is portrayed as the cause of all distress and misfortunes in Goray. People blame her guided by the evil power. Even old Granny of eighty suffers from hatred of people. Nechele, another female character, is accused of bewitching her own husband, rabbi and others. The society does not recognize the experiences of women and treats them as “other”. Arrangement of social and cultural conditions is so unfair that only males are the righteous to define and interpret. Singer is not meaningless to portray Rechele rather than any other male character. It is not difficult to encounter with the fact that Jewish culture is heavily patriarchal. The conventions practiced in Jewish society are well enough to realize the fact. No doubt, context of modern Jewish society is different as they employ fewer spiritual performances. Yet some hints of patriarchy are reflected even in their developed and refined rituals.

17<sup>th</sup> century ghettos were spiritual and their entire activities were guided by Talmud and Torah that can be realized in *Satan in Goray*. Hence, *Satan in Goray* has become a lively detail of 17<sup>th</sup> century patriarchal Jewish ideology. The context of historical Chmelnicki massacre, accommodation of 17<sup>th</sup> century conventional practices, citation of relevant gossip of Jewish ghettos all reinforce to justify that the novel truly depicts the mid-seventeenth century Polish Jewish male ideology.

### **Introduction of the Author**

The Nobel Prize Laureate Isaac Bashavis Singer(1904-1991) is a Polish born American writer who writes in Yiddish language. He was educated at the Warsaw

Rabbinical Seminary and worked as a regular journalist and columnist for the New York paper, the *Jewish Daily Forward* after he emigrated to the United States in 1935. Although he originally wrote in Hebrew, he adopted Yiddish as his medium of his expression. In 1978 he was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature “for his impassioned narrative art which, with roots in Polish-Jewish cultural tradition, brings universal human conditions to life” (28).

Singer draws most of his fictional materials from the Polish *shtetl* (Jewish village community) of tremendous physical deprivation, poverty and superstitions. War, brutality, depression and unemployment are the characteristic themes of his writings. His characters are the revelations of the temporalities in human affairs and the strange, unusual tendencies of bad attitudes or desires rather than instructional types. Singer also accommodates the human conscience, responsibility and love in his works. It is widely accepted that Singer follows the Jews from disaster to disaster from Chmelnicki to Hitler depicting the three hundred years in between as tormented interval for a nation in exile. Though he is a moralist, he usually keeps his fantasies and his conscience principle separate. Singer has been more the exile turning a confirmed separation into an imaginative embrace of what has been lost and casting his thoughts back upon his own past and upon the history of Jews. The haunted world of Yiddish Poland maintains the grip on his imagination.

Since he spent most of his youth in Warsaw, Poland, as a son of a rabbi, he had a quite strict upbringing, although by the time he reached his late teens he was reading extensively in secular literature. His writing career began with proof-reading for the Yiddish Journals and then translating novels. Meanwhile his private experiments at writing began appearing in Yiddish literary magazines. Finally, his first novel *Satan in Goray* was serialized in 1934. For the first time Singer

experienced *shtetl* life and met people who believed in magic; whose superstitions date from the middle ages. This fascination with ancient helps to explain why, in many of Singer's tales, the reader is never sure of the exact period and is often brought back into a legendary past. Most of Singer's works are set in the vanished world of European Jewry, a world of *shtetl* and ghetto, yeshiva and synagogue that truly capture the then social temperaments. His major works include *A Friend of Kafka*(1970), *The Slave*(1962), *The Black Wedding*(1961), *The Estate*(1969),*The Manor*(1967), *The Family Moskat*(1950), *Gimpol The Fool And Other Stories*(1957), *The Magician of Lublin*(1960). Many of these have been published by Penguin, together with his autobiography *Love and Exile* and a volume entitled *The Penguin Collected Stories of Isaac Bashevis Singer*. *Gimpol The Fool*(1953), perhaps his most famous story, translated by Saul Bellow, deals with a familiar type in Jewish-American fiction. *The Black Wedding*, sometimes compared with *Satan in Goray*, is an example which uses the superstitions of the village of peasants. His narratives celebrate or reinforce the value of his communities. Moreover, his communities, sometimes, are in pressure from outside (from social upheaval or the Jewish Enlightenment) or from within. His most recurring figures are isolated. *The Slave* is a story having a setting of seventeenth century Poland. Although his stories are located in America, they deal with first generation emigrants and the key emotions are either confusion faced with American life or simple nostalgia for Europe.

Singer has repeatedly stated that he writes in two modes. One is a narrative which uses primitive superstition and the supernatural; the other is more realistic mode. The dominant influence on the realistic mode was certainly Singer's elder brother Israel Joshua. His respect for brother was so great that he dedicated *The Family Moskat* to him. The companion novels *The Manor* and *The Estate* deal with

the broad historical theme of the emergence of the Polish Jews out of medieval village life into modern industrial society.

He is one of some prominent Jewish American writers. A considerable part of Jews are also there who observe very few religious rituals. Jew Americans trace their heritage to a variety of countries in Europe and others. Isaac Bashevis Singer puts his version regarding his Jewishness in this way:

I never call myself a Jewish writer, although I'm a Jew and much immersed in Jewishness. I would prefer to call myself a Yiddish writer because a writer is called after his language, not his religion. But you can also call me a Jewish writer. My father would have denied this because, to him, a Jewish writer was only a man who wrote about Jewish religion. But there is a lot of religion and religious content also in my writing and I'm at least as much a religion writer as the other writers (e.g., Philip Roth, Norman Mailer) who are Jewish and either in Yiddish or English. (38)

Anyway, he is one of the major Jewish writers who have accommodated the political and social history in their works with the modern themes. The horror, depression of the past stand in his fiction. The effect of ideology of socialism has also influenced him like other Jewish writers.

### **The Background of the Novel**

The society of the novel *Satan in Goray* is medieval period. It truly depicts the societal status in Poland in the middle of seventeenth century. Goray is a small town inhabited by Jews who live by trading with one another and with the peasants in the surrounding villages and farms. The action takes place during the years 1665 and 1666, when Jewish expectation of the advent of their Messiah was at their height.

For this is the year that cabalists, through numerological calculations based on esoteric biblical texts, had designated as the long awaited 'end of days'. It is the setting that sixteen years before, the Bogden Chmelnicki, an officer in Polish army earlier but, later, joined into Cossack and invaded Poland, had led an army troops in insurrection against Polish land-owners. It was since been estimated that 1000,000 Jews perished during the years from 1648 to 1658. The chaos in Poland resulted from brutal invasion by Chmelnicki and the Cossacks created a horror. The defeat of both host stimulated them to come up with the conclusion that the true Messiah would appear. The Jews of Poland believe that, as Christian would say, the end of the time has come and expect the Messiah to come. Many Jews fall under this sway and the rabbi of Goray resists but this further ruins the town. As these political and social disasters are played out, a young orphan, Rechele, who is insane, becomes the center of focus of the town, as she is unmarried. It is associated with the cases as in 1660 the famous 'false Messiah' arose in Turkey, claiming to be ready to lead the Jews to Judgment Day and a new era. Through out eastern Europe hope sprang up, especially in the Polish-Ukrainian regions divested by the murderous Bogden Chmelnicki not long before. Bogden Chmelnicki, historically, was an officer in Polish army who joined into the Cossack territory of Russia. He organized the Cossacks and invaded Poland. Though his army could not control it for long, they caused heavy massacre.

Most part of the background in conversation and practices of the characters are based on Jewish religion. Whole atmosphere of the novel and its entire activities are guided and shaped by the Jewish culture. The rules of Torah and Talmud are repeatedly mentioned. The festivals like Yom Kippur, Rosh Hashanah and even Shabbat are often quoted which capture several incidents in the novel. As mentioned earlier, the Goray is a place inhabited almost by Jews. Hence, the novel incorporates

the social life of the medieval Poland that was in the practice of Jewish rituals. The main issue of the novel, outwardly, seems the religious redemption and advent of messiah at the end of the days. Yet the novel reflects the Jewish societal ideology based on patriarchal norms and ideology functioning dominantly there. The plight of old Granny, the accusation to Nechele of bewitching her own husband and others etc are other examples to know how women were treated in that society. System of performing several rituals proves that Judaism and its practices are heavily male dominated. Since the childhood to all phases of life they do have differentiation in term of their gender. They do have several conventions, values, norms and traditions which have, indeed, accommodated the practices of gender disparity. Many Jewish critics have accepted that the patriarchy has a place in the historic evolution of Jewish religion. Tamar Ross has described it in her book *Expending the Palace of Torah: Feminism and Orthodoxy* broadly. She considers the received Torah an insufficient foundation because of its overwhelming male perspectives. Stuart Z. Charme in her book *The Gender Question and the Study of Jewish Children* writes about the Jewish feminist movement as:

Since the 1980, Jewish feminist have repeatedly testified to the contradictions Jewish women have experienced, sometimes as early as childhood- between their consciousness of themselves as females and their consciousness of themselves as Jews, that is a conflict between two different identities (paskow 1976;pogrebin 1991; Schneider 1984; Dufour 200). Many Jewish women have reported the beginning of their disillusionment with the Judaism as a painful side effect of the dawning of their feminist consciousness (Kendall 1983; Umansky 1985). With the vise of the feminist moment Jewish women began to



complain about their exclusion from the public religious realm of Judaism (not being counted in the quorum for prayer, or *minyan* ; being hidden behind the curtain (*mechitzah* ) separating men from women in some synagogues, not being allowed to wear the Jewish ritual object of *tefillin*, *tallit* or *kipot*; not being allowed to read from the Torah, being barred from the rabbinate), their inferior status in Jewish religious laws, and their subordinate role and lack of voice in the religious narrative of Judaism.

In the case of religious behavior women are marginalized and that effect goes to their other societal performances. Women in Judaism are so heavily suppressed that it's very difficult for them to raise their voice. They are confined within the narrow periphery of their household works. Their rituals have trapped them in a marginal position for centuries. There is no space in the outer sphere and even in the yard of synagogue for them.

The home rituals of welcoming the Sabbath( *kabbalat Shabbat*) are among the more widely observed, or at least recognizable, Jewish rituals. There are also rituals with a history of gender role differentiation. Sabbath candle-lighting is traditionally a woman's duty whereas *kiddish*( the wine blessing) is traditionally a man's duty. Similarly, prayer at the western wall is regulated by orthodox traditions and a fence separates male and female prayer areas of unequal size as the men's side is larger. This all implicates the women to be confined within house or they do have fewer chances to be outside.

Although there is no question that enormous progress towards gender equality has occurred within the American-Jewish community in the last generation, their several rituals reveal that there was male dominance in early and medieval Jewish

societies. The Jewish bride in the(Ashkenazi) European Jewish custom circles the groom seven times accompanied by mother. It indicates that he is at the center, while bride is at the margin and seven blessings recited by men only, do not give women a voice in this part of the ceremony. Similarly the covering of the bride with the veil can be (has been also) interpreted as symbolically rendering her invisible. There are some harsh implications of the legal arrangements which are still valid in the rabbinical courts in Israel as well as in the rest of the orthodox Jewish world. Most importantly, a Jewish woman wed by the laws of the Torah can be divorced only by her husband's act of giving her a traditional bill of divorce (get), otherwise it is not possible. The Polish society of 17<sup>th</sup> century is reflected in this novel since it portrays their religious, social and somewhat political activities. The deceptions, defeats of truth are shown as societal phenomena. Rechele, a feeble girl, has been portrayed as an evil-spirit possessed character.

Why Singer chose the handicapped innocent girl for the tool of evil spirit rather than so many other male characters is a striking factor that lets a ground to raise the issue of feminism. Almost all female characters in the novel are negative. Nechele is presented as the more emotional and less logical, hypocritical and talkative in her behavior and at the same time she is also blamed of bewitching other. Old Granny is another pathetic character who is ignored and hated by her own heir whom she left all her properties. The rituals such as wedding, seven days of Benediction, celebration of feast and festivals, prayer procedure all present the male domination. How Polish ghetto in 17<sup>th</sup> century used to practice their daily life, perform and present their notion is answered in the novel.

Version of the rabbi, the bath house, prayer room etc are architected on the basis of medieval Jewish society. The ritual slaughterer, house hold activities of the

rural region etc truly remind the medieval society to a reader. The scenario is utterly rural and they are more communal and less economic in term of their activities.

### **Literary Review**

*Satan in Goray* (1935) is the first novel by novel prize laureate Isaac Bashevis Singer written originally in Yiddish language. The novel deals with the Polish shtetl as a raw material transforming its folkways, religious practices, superstitions of male ideology into superior work of art. The events of the book take place during the year 1665-1666 when Jewish expectation of messiah was at the height. David Seed, in *Critical Quarterly* writes:

The novel's biblical language constantly depresses the fantastic events within the narrative itself. Here, as in many of his other tales and novels, Singer has evoked a landscape densely populated with *dybbuks* and other supernatural spirits,..... be that as it may, one of his richest veins of material is traditional and demons and sprits play an integral part in the textual of his fiction. In interviews Singer has stated that these demons are metaphors for the ways things happen; but he has also said that he has a literal belief in them himself (he is deeply interested in psychic research). (75)

The above argument can be observed as it truly captures the wide range of human sentiments. The sentiment regarding the gender is crucial in the novel since Rechele, a feeble handicapped girl, is the center of the novel. David Seed further argues on the writing of Singer, "his narratives celebrate or reinforce the value of his communities" (75). This helps to prove that the novel is not indifferent with the then societal ideology that prevailed there. Singer seems much more affected by the Polish Jews culture through which he got stimulated to write. John Guzlowski writes:

Rabbi in *Satan in Goray* represents a world marked by the ‘prevailing truth’ of an ‘established order’ with its ‘hierarchical rank, privileges, norms and prohibitions’. That seems evident given the rabbi’s actions following his return: ‘he began to supervise the observance of the laws of ritual diet, saw to it that the women went to the ritual bath house at the proper time, at that young men studied the Torah. (131)

Singer has strictly arrested the Jewish religiosity embedded in their daily activities. The Torah that has privileged the man and hence shaped the society’s values and norms was a dominant factor to reflect the medieval Polish-Jewish society. The medieval society was definitely more dogmatic in terms of rituals practices. And it was the rituals which harbored several male dominated superstitions, ideologies to a great extent. Maurice Carr mentions:

Yiddish literature has been enriched by Isaac Bashevis Singer’s novel, *Satan in Goray*, set in 17<sup>th</sup>-century Poland and describing how the remnants of Jewry of after the Chmielnicki pogroms fall prey to rabid superstitions. The horrors are presented without that *nebbish* whine-with no pathos. There is to the tale vividness, the intensity, of an eerily entertaining nightmare which overcomes the reader, oblivious of author who keeps himself aloof through out. (30)

In fact, as mentioned above, ‘rabid superstition’ is the territory that accommodates the several male dominated ideologies that are the part of their daily life. No doubt the medieval Polish Jewish society was rural and it was, yet, not in the contact of urban and industrialized area, as the novelist repeatedly defines the village ‘an edge of the world’. They, Polish, heavily lacked the modern conscience and thoroughly practiced their conventions and traditions developed from centuries.

Reviewer Mark D. Brugh views, “The world of religious conflict, superstition is Singer’s main interest. The Satan in Goray is a strong beginning, a prophetic book of a trapped people on the edge of a disaster. Singer’s rich language, his pinpoint descriptions of the people, places and religious factions are stunning” (24). The book captures the circumstance just after a dreadful massacre in which people’s psychology is full of horror. But they indulge more in religious performances for mental support. Appreciating Isaac Bashevis Singer, Sanford Pinsker writes, “Singer, of course, was a diplomat among literary diplomats, a man who knew how to generate good press and to cultivate an adoring public” (76).

Most of the critics and encyclopedias recapitulate the novel as ‘religious hysteria’ and we hardly get the criticisms through feminist perspective. But more strikingly, there are several events, performances on which females have been derogated. As a reader this researcher found several images and outlook of women’s suppression. The main character of the novel, Rechele, is well enough to realize what was the outlooks of the then society towards women. As a female character she is deprived of family’s care, initially because of her mother’s death though it is also associated with her birth as she is a bad omen not for only her, her family but for whole Goray people. Afterwards, her father does not care her, defining her lameness as a god’s punishment for it was her own destiny. Moreover, she is blamed of mysterious disease. She is victimized of sexual abuse and she seems a passive object like a nonliving thing while Reb Gedaliya comes to be her husband replacing Reb Itche Mates. Hence, on one hand she is ill-treated on the other, she is portrayed as a hysteric character with strange behavior that ‘aroused sinful thoughts in men’. Her portrayal as a carrier of evil spirit justifies the derogatory outlook of the people over female. She is a bad omen in the novel that resulted in many misfortunes.

## **II. Theoretical Methodology: Feminism**

### **Background and Development of Feminist Theory**

The term 'Feminism' originated from French word "Feminisme" to denote the support for women's equal legal and political rights with men. The Utopian socialist Charles Fourier had coined the term first. Now 'feminism' also refers to any theory which sees the relationship between the sexes. It refers to generating systematic idea that defines women's place in society and culture. Feminism is the organized movement which promotes equality for men and women in political, economic and social spheres. It articulates political opposition to the subordination of women whether that subordination is ascribed by law or imposed by social convention. It also offers alternatives to existing unequal power relations of gender. Feminist scholar-activists have discovered the women's cultural experience as a negative occurrence. So, they primarily recognize the validity of women's own experience and needs. And, they acknowledge the values that claim equal status for women. publicly. Similarly they exhibit consciousness of institutionalized injustice towards women in a society and campaign a struggle against it. They advocate the elimination of that injustice challenging the prevailing social institutions.

It is the culture and society that value masculine as active, dominating, adventurous, rational and creative. Feminine is identified as passive, emotional and conventional. Male behaviors have been considered as the norm, and women have been viewed, to some degree, as inferior. Through history, women have been labeled physically weaker than men, more emotional, less reasonable, and less able to learn and dependant. Feminist writers focus on women's rights and their emancipation. Feminism regards women as human beings who are either suppressed or oppressed or deprived of rights. They fight against contemporary culture and tradition which is

male dominated. Sheila Ruth defines feminism, “Feminism is a perspective, a world view, a kind of activism and political and spiritual theory” (4). Its central concern is with the social distinction between men and women.

Women were regarded inferior from the beginning of the civilization but later on they became conscious of their secondary position and began to question it. Even in early nineteenth century England, wives were taken as slaves and were sold by their counterparts. They were deprived of the opportunity for studying as male. So, Marry Wollstonecraft first raised her voice in support of the education and emancipation of women. She is considered the first feminist theorist with her publication of *A Vindication of Right of Women*. Women lacked sufficient training and education.

The industrial revolution brought a radical change in the life of the western society in the second half of eighteenth and nineteenth century. But this situation could not improve their status since it caused decline in the domestic production. The women of middle class could raise their voice for equal opportunities and higher education. So, several acts were passed for the benefits of women and children. Before nineteenth century there were some women writers who focused on feminist perspective. Jane Austin, George Eliot, Bronte sisters were some of them. Another remarkable step for the betterment of women was the establishment of American Woman Suffrage Association that fought for emancipation of women and won Right to Vote in 1920.

Before the first quarter of the twentieth century, women seemed to be merely asking for the right to vote. But, later on, it developed in a broader sphere accommodating wide bases of women’s interests. Feminist literary criticism came into existence from the late 1960s. It became a political movement concerning social,

economic aspects in terms of equality and freedom between men and women.

Writings of Virginia Woolf including *Rooms of one's Own* supplied the consciousness among people. Similarly the publication of *The Second Sex* by Simone de Beauvoir strengthened the modern feminism. She projects that the male writer usually assumes female as “negative object” or “other” where as male is supposed to be the dominating and defining “subject”. Many feminists have tried to identify and confront some of the more hurtful stereotypes. Abrams says, “Feminist literary criticism continues in our time to be closely interrelated with the movement by political feminist for social, political, economic and cultural freedom and equality” (63). Feminism is not only political word but also a literary theory and trend in modern era. Many feminist critics have decried the literature written by men for its depiction of women as marginal, docile, negative and subservient to men's interest.

Feminism underlines the issues of inequality and focuses on gender politics, power relations and sexuality. The theme harbored in feminist movement are gender discrimination, sexual objectification, patriarchal oppression, female stereotyping, new women, female self etc.

Feminist critics of different geography and culture, though share broad range of interests and missions, have shown different orientations. So, feminism is a big umbrella term covering many varieties of feminists. It has taken different directions in different places. On this basis we can talk of:

1. French school of feminist criticism
2. American school of feminist criticism
3. British School of feminist criticism

### **French Feminism**



French feminism is more theoretical than the Anglo American feminism. It has been influenced from the ideas of the poststructuralists like Derrida and psychoanalysis like Lacan. But they are indebted to and at the same time critical of such theorists too.

The major impetus for French feminism was derived from the Revolutionary atmosphere of the students' movement of 1968. The major concern of that political revolution was the transformation of signifying practices. In this regard French feminists, too, concentrate their attention primarily on the issue of language and subjectivity. Influenced greatly from the ideas of Derrida and Lacan, Julia Kristeva, Helen Cixous, and Luce Irigaray have underscored on the need of developing *l'écriture féminine*, a feminine writing that has its source in the unconscious, and the body.

Kristeva, even if she follows Lacan to a greater extent, criticises him for ignoring the importance of pre-Oedipal state. For her, feminine language comes from the pre-Oedipal state, from what she calls "semiotic" zone prior to the child's entry into language, which bears cultural norms, the rules of the father. However, she believes that total reliance on such language becomes the cause of further political marginalization. That is why she alerts us that semiotic works with the symbolic but to subvert its logic and rupture its order. Helen Cixous subverts the binary between male and female asserting that there are not only two sexes but multiple. Cixous, like Irigaray, turns the idea of lack (woman as lack, lack of penis) into an idea of excess and challenges the binary opposition that is evident in the phallogocentric system of language. Women don't fit into a binary opposition because they are more; they are in excess of the left side of the opposition (male/female, penis/nothing). Patriarchal culture's privileging of the left side of the binary, the penis, subordinates multiplicity.

Cixous insists that women must write their bodies and unfold their unconscious. For Irigaray female language is more fluid, diffuse, like her sexuality which is multiple. All of these feminist writers regard maternal as empowering. Yet there are some feminists who have questioned this overemphasis on body as biologically reductive and politically impotent.

### **American Feminism**

Like French feminism, which had its source of inspiration in the students' and workers' movement in 1968, American feminism has drawn major impetus and stimulus from the women's rights movement and civil rights movement of 1960s. But the focus of the two does not coverage. The primary focus of French has remained the issue of language, and that of American the reexamination of women's representation in male's cultural and literary texts and the establishment of female literary tradition.

Like Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* and Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*, Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* became a seminal work for the initiation of American feminism. Her book was primarily concerned with the exclusion of American middle class women from the public fields by entrapping them within domestic sphere. The next equally or even more influential book was Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics*, which distinguished between the notion of "sex" and "gender", sex being related to biology and gender culturally constructed. Her book also examined the representation of women in literature and their subordination in patriarchal social system.

As mentioned earlier, there were many American feminists who tried to identify female literary tradition by recovering so many silenced women writers from the past. Such critics include Ellen Moers (*Literary Women*), Patricia Meyer Spacks (*The Female Imagination*), Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar (*The Madwoman in the*

*Attic*), and Showalter (*A Literature of One's Own*). Among them Showalter's work has remained the most influential with its division of women's writing into three phases: "feminine", "feminist" and "female". In the feminine phase (1840-1880) women wrote like males imitating male models; in the feminist they protested male models and their values; and in the last phase (1920 onwards) they have started asserting their own perspectives and models by freeing themselves from "two forms of dependency," imitation and protest (Showalter (1232)). Critics like Showalter have also raised the issue of the relationship between feminism and male theories. In American an important recent development has been to speak about women through minority positions like Black (like Barbara Smith's *Toward a Black Feminist Criticism* (1977)) and lesbian (like Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble*), developing new modes of feminism.

### **British Feminism**

British feminism, from its outset, has remained politically motivated with its insistence on the need to situate or locate literary texts and the issue of the presence of very few women writers in the past within the material condition of the time. That is why Virginia Woolf claims that women writers of the past could not produce much of significant work because they did not have "a room of their own". Her central claim is that "a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction" (4). British feminism has yoked itself a lot with Marxism. Juliet Mitchell in her work like *Women's Estate* and *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* has tried to examine patriarchal system in terms of "Marxist categories of production and private property as well as psychoanalytic theories of gender" (Habib 671). Mitchell's attempt was to forge a coalition between Marxism psychoanalysis for the purpose of feminism. One of the most significant Marxist feminists, Michele Barrett, in her *Women's Oppression*,

attempted to show a link between patriarchy and capitalism in the oppression of women. Her idea is that to analysis the representation of gender, we need to integrate feminism with Marxist analysis of class. There are many other Marxist feminists in Britain who are even critical of the tendency of American feminists to reconstruct female traditions and to deconstruct stereotypes of women. They include critics like Judith Newton, Mary Jacobus, and Deborah Rosenfelt.

To sum up, feminism aims at liberating women from patriarchal domination. Despite the diversity of feminist theories, they share some common grounds. Feminists opine that it is the struggle that free them from male-made values and norms. K. K. Ruthvan writes, “Women are not inferior by nature but inferiorized by culture, they are articulated into inferiority” (45). The first task of feminist theory is to document both past and present inequalities.

### **Jewish Feminism**

The Jewish way of life continued changing its cultural, intellectual and religious practices. With the fall of the temple in Jerusalem, Jews worshipped in synagogues, or congregations, which eventually were headed by rabbis or teachers. Over the centuries, the rabbis’ teachings evolved into Rabbinic Judaism based on the Torah and the Talmud, a collection of legal ruling and commentaries. The Jewish community increasingly developed into the patriarchal dominance after the Babylonian Captivity. Roy T. Matthews and F. Dewitt Platt in *The Western Humanity* make it clear as:

In Societal and Family Relationship, from earliest times to the founding of the monarchy, Jewish families survived in an agrarian economy and society. Although the patriarchal structure set as the

pattern of life and ensured the dominance of the tribal chieftains, men and women shared duties and responsibility because in a rural society a family's continuation and the preservation of its property required the efforts of all its members. With the family, women exercised some freedom, mothers' and sisters' roles were taken seriously, and the family rights of wives and mothers were protected by law. However, with the coming of the kingdom of Israel and during and after the Babylonian Captivity, the male leaders, in their efforts to protect the new political system, the integrity of their religion, and the Hebrew way of life, formally and informally limited the right and power of women. (151)

Jewish society practiced patriarchal ideology since the earliest times like other religious societies. Women enjoyed some rights but those rights were limited. Only male as rabbis were the leaders of Jewish community that closed the threshold of all women's possibilities. Women had had significant economic role in the family but they were defined as economically dependent, as homemakers and consumers. Varieties of Jewish societies, from earlier monarchy to kingdom of Israel, witnessed the gender disparity. Platt and Matthews further argue:

This trend accelerated in the Hellenistic period as urbanism and commercialism made inroads into the Jewish social order and

family. Work was increasingly divided according to gender, with women being assigned domestic duties and subordinated and restricted within the economic, legal and cultural system. The changing, and often conflicting, roles for women were reflected in the Hebrew Bible and other literature, which recorded the instances of women serving as priestesses or influencing Hebrew officials, defined the qualities of a good wife, justified women's subservient status in a patriarchal order, and blamed them for human transgressions. (152)

The dichotomy of male and female for the division of work continued with the development of trade, commerce and urbanization. Hence, men were again overpowered and privileged with the reality that they used priestesses under their control. Shira L. Lander argues in *Journal of Women's History* as:

Although the rabbis used the cultural symbol of the adulteress, they also employed socioeconomic control to enable a husband to enforce rabbinic expectation of wifeness. Peskowitz argues that the ketubbah, or "marriage settlement", by deferring payment until death or divorce, allowed the husband to control his wife's behaviors until such time. Thus, the ketubbah is recast as privileged to be earned rather than an Inalienable right. (188)

The legal and societal concerns were governed by the rabbis. Women, in Jewish culture, were made weaker and powerless by the rabbis. Above lines also prove that there was gender-based power inequalities in wedding rituals. A woman had to be dominated from the time of engagement. This implicates the status of a wife in a family right from the beginning. Women in traditional society were viewed as wives and mothers. Ideally, they managed the household to increase the productivity and value. Jessica Kuper in the *Social Science Encyclopedia* clarifies:

Men and women were punished for adultery, women more severely. Menstruating women were avoided as unclean.

Generally, man did not even talk with women who were not part of their families. They could inherit property, but their contract could be disallowed by fathers or husbands. Women were responsible for the religious training of their children yet had no public religious role. Generally, men did not even talk with women who were not part of their families. Laws and guild regulations denied women access to apprenticeship programs. Nonetheless, they crowded in to the growing cities and towns. Middle-class women could withdraw from the workforce, but poor women were forced to accept harsh working conditions and low wages to survive. Young women were on their own; older

women were often responsible for children. Abandoned women risked being put to death as witches, especially if they were healers. (111)

One can view the plight of women in medieval society in different cultural background. Jewish community witnessed the accusation on women as witch throughout the medieval era. So, the vision of feminists has encompassed the economic, social rules and sexuality for the emancipation from sexual stereotyping of any kind.

Jewish patriarchal ideology was heavily rooted in their tradition and developed into more conventional form. *Britannica* mentions, “ In Hinduism, Jewish, Buddhist tradition and in folk culture and preliterate society, generally strangers, malformed individuals, and old women are accused of evil eyes”(412). Women, especially malformed or orphan or feeble, were often blamed as evil and accordingly writers presented them as a derogatory stereotype. Writers chose female character for negative reference as conscious or unconscious presuppositions. Only the women were imposed the accusation as “witch” or “evil”. Irit Koren in his article “The Bride’s Voice” writes, “The ability of the rabbi to interfere and limit the power of the agreement; the superstitious belief in the ‘Evil eye’ which could result from evil addressing such as an issue before marriage” (42). So many Jewish feminists believed that reform should start at the beginning, at the root of the contemporary evil, that is, with the institution of marriage. Amaury de Rioncourt in his book *Women and Power in History* states, “The uncompromising patriarchalism of Judaism began by strengthening the natural patriarchal tendencies of other Semitic populations” (47).



It is obvious that Jewish rituals supplied the patriarchal notions into the Jewish communities from the beginning. That is why gender disparity is embedded in their culture. So, Jewish feminist movement begins reviewing their religious texts that project the patriarchal ideology. Tamar Ross writes, “We view the Senaitic Torah as merely earthy reflection of a metaphysical Torah, which must be supplemented by history” (223). They aim at releasing the society from the effect of the dominant patriarchal religious interpretation. Although organized and systematic history of Jewish feminist movement does not seem long and explicit, it has got its maturity increasingly. Rachel Adler answers the question “What is the proper subject matter of Jewish feminism?” in his article “Feminist Judaism: Past and Future” in this way:

Our first two anthologies of Jewish Feminist thought puzzled Christian feminists, crammed as they were with a hodgepodge of articles, most of which had nothing to do with matters of faith and doctrine. Instead history, sociology and psychology rubbed shoulders with halakhic (legal) analysis, personal narratives, new rituals, and a very few articles recognizable as theology. Each of those articles was a seedling of a new subject in its academic discipline. Now there is so much scholarship on Judaism and gender as Jewishness and gender in all of these disciplines that no single individual could keep up with it. (76)

The same root of Judaism and Christianity resulted in a puzzle for feminist issue of Judaism. It is not a wonder that Jewish culture sometimes overlaps and

interrelates the Christianity. But there is a fundamental difference between the two in their gender issues as one can not cope with the other.

Complete absence of women in the history of Jewish culture exposes the patriarchy in Judaism. Jewish history is utterly male-centered. The version of Kate Millet in *Sexual Politics*, (1969) “Patriarchy subordinates the female to the male or treats the female as an inferior male. Power is exerted directly or indirectly in civil and domestic life to constrain women” (137) rightly matches to the context of Jewish culture. Jewish feminist-activist G. Rubin gives a light on this issue:

Far from being a reflection of historical reality, women’s marginalization, especially in the family, is the essence of women’s contribution to Jewish survival. This trivialization of women goes unnoticed by the visitor, who raises no eyebrow or question and to whom the display seems perfectly natural and factually acceptable. (515)

The above lines are quite touching. They explore the pitiless common Jewish temperaments. Male turns blind eyes to the contribution of a woman because of overwhelming male perspective. This seems something more than subordination; a society witnesses all kinds of bad treatments indifferently. One can easily anticipate that the Jewish culture harbors countless unfair activities.

Now it stimulates one to retrospect the history of Jewish communities while they were far from the influence of modernization. Dafna N. Israeli has analyzed the male-centered Jewish ideology broadly. Israeli clarifies the position of women in day-today life of Jewish community. Israeli argues:

Hegemonic Judaism privileges activities typically performed by men and usually permitted only to men. Women's traditionally sung activities such as preparing the food for the family, holiday meals and sending portions to poor and needy, consecrating the home for Sabbath and the holidays, calling on the sick, negotiating with the non-Jewish shopkeepers everyday into a store and by night back to the bedroom, are nowhere highlighted on front stage in the history. This important museum symbolically annihilates women and reinforces the hegemonic Jewish view that institutionalizes men's centrality and their dominance over women. (64)

This description draws the ready-made role of women in Jewish family. It exposes the bitter reality inherent in Judaism how women are deprived of their potentialities. They are given a very insignificant status and treated as inferior members of society. All important aspects of social life are in male-hands. Women are meant only to serve males and look after the household activities and children. The Jewish society strongly negates the women's possibilities. In fact this patriarchal dominance is a social evil, but ironically, women are blamed of evil. Irit Koren, therefore, suggests the ways for the release from patriarchal rituals of Judaism as follows:

1. Creating a parallel ritual act
2. Introducing variation in them and viewing them merely as symbolic
3. Avoiding particular act and viewing them as oppressive
4. Employing legal resistance

Similarly, Norm Cohen writes in the same issue:

I feel it is eminently applicable to Jewish women in the process of reviewing the fabric of Jewish tradition. We also need ceremonies that validate and affirm her natural and elemental life-giving and life-protecting instincts as the essence of holiness deserving of community support and blessings. We need to support and affirm men's struggle to revise the old notion of masculinity which is rooted in fear of women.

(38)

Women are oppressed due to their sex based on dominant ideology of patriarchy. Patriarchy is the system which oppresses women through its social, economic and political institutions. Through out the history, men have had greater power in both public and private sphere. To maintain this power, men have created boundaries and obstacles for women making it harder for women to hold power. The unequal power relation has caused the inhuman treatments.

Hence, women for centuries were considered weak. So, they could not come to the ranks of men and at the same time they could not occupy equal status in society. Moreover, societies imposed various types of faulty accusation on them. Almost all religious traditions of the world pushed them to the margin. In Judaism women have, in general, been forced to occupy a secondary place in relation to men. This secondary standing is imposed by strong environmental forces of social and cultural tradition under the purposeful control of men. So, in the context of Judaism too, feminism has same political purpose enhancing support for the aims of women's liberation. However, it is not easy task to remove the deep rooted structure of society. The movement has achieved some fruitful results.

### III. Textual Analysis

#### Synopsis of the novel

The novel begins with the horrible scenario of Chmelnicki massacre at the Goray, a small town (*shtetell*) situated in the province dominated by the city of Lublin. The place inhabited almost solely by Jews, primarily peasants, suffered much of heavy destruction and casualty of life and property. The time is of mid-17th century when the destitute citizens of devastated Goray begin to return towards their own village, Goray. Goray is a small town situated in the province dominated by the city of Lublin. The action takes during the year 1665-1666 when Jewish expectations of the advent of their Messiah are at their height. Rechele is the main character of the novel. She is lame and shows mysterious behaviors. She seems indifferent to young girls and wives who come to visit her. She screams and hides under beds in thunder.

Bodgan Chmelnicki and his followers could not capture the city of Zamosc for a long but destroyed heavily. Destroyed Goray was completely deserted earlier but people started to return after eighteen years of the massacre. Rabbi Benish Askenazi, a renowned rabbi, was the last returned citizen who could maintain his earlier status to some extent since his house had a little damage miraculously. His young daughter Rechele would arouse sinful thoughts in men. The town appears busy in summer but the havoc becomes apparent with the beginning of the cold season. Ozer is rabbi's oldest son and Levi is the youngest. Levi's wife Nechele is a daughter of rich merchant. Rest members of rabbi's family are either died in the massacre or left or died in Lublin. Extra ordinary rumors take place in Goray repeatedly. Chmelnicki massacre is associated with the arrival of Messah and "end of the days". Redemption of Jews through Sabbatai Zevi cult is the center of gossip. Sabbatai Zevi, according to its preacher, is a great and holy one awaited for 1700 years. People with various

speculations are busy in gossip. Rainfall, noise, forceful wind, uprooted trees, fearful images in dream are the features in the new Goray. Sometimes, some positive symbols such as smoke from chimneys, recites of benedictions are seen but it instantly replaced by fearful havoc. Rab Mordecai Joseph claims himself as an angle of Sabbatai Zevi citing his wonderful experiences. There is a clash between two groups, followers of Sabbatai Cult and its opponents, grows and Mordecai's group beats its opponents rabbi and his disciple Grunam.

The story flashes back to the birth and upbringing of Rechele and associates her with the massacre and other misfortunes. Her mother died leaving her an infant of five and she remained in Lublin at the home of an uncle with an old woman named Granny. Granny died while she was twelve. dead Granny calls her at night with her blood soaked head when she is in trance. It caused caused her sick and paralyzed. Rechele unusually says that nobody wants her unless Satan will have her and bursts into a sharp laughter. Reb Itche Mates, so-called representative of sabbatai Zevi cult, sends a proposal of marriage to Rechele. Many others convince her arguing that Mates is a holy man sent by heaven to save her. A letter arrived from Lublin by an emissary for Rabbi Benish discloses all hypocrisies and deceptive manner of Sabbatai Zevi cult. Preparation of Rabbi Benish for war against Sabbatai cult collapses with out cause and he is carried towards Lublin as he wants when he is sick. Bridal procedure takes a long period with several incidents. Reb Gedaliya, a ritual slaughterer and follower of sabbatai Zevi cult, replaces the Itche Mates and becomes the husband of Rechele. Rechele suffers from mysteries disease. People gossip about witch and evil relating her sickness. Goray repeatedly suffers from unusual and unnatural dreadful havocs until Rechele lies there. The dispute between Sacred and Profane representing god and evil respectively with due symbolic figure occuppies a lesson. Rechele is

impregnated by Satan that makes Reb Gedaliya uneasy. Daybbuk of Goray, then, discloses all deceptions of Sabatai Zevi cult but it too accepts some mysteries of Rechele. Rechele dies after evil spirit leaves her since Rechele accepts evil no longer despite its persuasion and threaten.

### **Women as Evil in Jewish Community**

The novel *Satan in Goray* by Isaac Bashevis Singer presents the Jewish male ideology of medieval Poland. It exposes the mid-seventeenth century Polish-Jewish patriarchal society in which Rechele, main character of the novel, is presented as a stereotype of a hysteric and evil-spirit possessed woman. Rechele, as depicted in the novel *Satan in Goray*, is a pathetic character on whom the whole novel revolves around. She is a daughter of a Jew and her activities are entirely guided by Jewish law. In the background of Jewish society, she has been victimized by the patriarchal culture.

The novel begins from the effects of Chmelnicki massacre. The crucial point is that the destruction resulted from that massacre is assumed to have been related with the birth of Rechele as that misfortune takes place just after the birth of Rechele. Under the title "Reb Eleazar Babad and His Daughter Rechele" of the first part, the text narrates, "Rechele had been born in Goray in 1648, a few weeks before the massacre" (45). This obviously reflects the patriarchal ideology where an innocent girl has been associated with the havoc. From the beginning, she has a very miserable and touching life. Born in a patriarchal society, she does not get any care from her father. Her father, a rabbi, is a community leader with a high prestige but he seems utterly indifferent to Rechele. Rechele is lame physically and has none to care who is suspected by the people of that community in different ways. She alone remains in the family and society because they all lack understanding of her sorrows and sufferings.

Instead of helping her, they blame her of groundless things. Not only this, it is she whose birth resulted in her mother's death. The novel seems to have intended more on how she caused massive misfortunes than how she, an innocent girl, suffered much. She came to the earth with several anguish and despair. She belongs to this kind of woman, Semone de Beauvoir writes as, "Some of these women appropriate their victims' fortune or obtain legacies by undue influence; this role being regarded as evil, those who play it are called 'bad women'" (342).

The male-structured ideology used to define the women in their own way. The society possessed the authority to introduce any female individual on the basis of their own measuring standard as the first lesson introduces, "Teme Rechel is a pious woman" (16). This is evidenced in the early part of the novel where Rechele is defined as a "pious woman". The main character of the novel, Rechele, has been presented as psychic character. The text in the same lesson introduces her as, "His daughter, Rechele, who was seventeen years old, had a lame foot and seldom showed herself outside, preferring to remain hidden in her room" (16). The book further says:

In early days after Reb Eleazar's arrival people had tried to arrange a match for her, because it was a pity for so old a girl to sit at home without a man.. But Reb Eleazar did not answer the match makers, never said yes or no, and they soon grew tired of useless talk. Besides, Rechele's behavior was strange from the beginning. When it thundered she would scream and hide under the bed. To the young wives and girls who came to call on her she said nothing, driving them away with her indifference. From early morning till night she sat alone, knitting stocking or merely reading in the Hebrew volumes she had brought from aboard. (16-17)



From these lines, we come to know that Rechele is almost discarded in the family. This alienation, perhaps, causes her distress. Her poor upbringing in a difficult situation makes her somewhat asocial. And primarily, she does not get affection from her parenting that a child requires. As a young lady of seventeen, Rechele notices that her match-makers ignored by her father and it reveals that she is like parentless.

In the patriarchal society, women, especially those who are discarded and deformed, are accused of evil and witch. The women who do not have support are hated and imposed various blames. Jewish culture has witnessed such practices in the society. More strikingly the text describes about her, "Though Rechele had a deformity, she aroused sinful thoughts in men" (17).

Whole atmosphere of the land of Goray is so mysteriously horrible that one can easily anticipate to its relation with evil power. David Seed in *Critical Quarterly* notes the situation of the beginning of the novel as, "The Jewish communities are in utter confusion, families broken up, houses and villages destroyed, and their economy ruined. The situation is ripe for an upsurge of other-worldly, mystical religion, and this is precisely what happens in the village of Goray"(75). There is the development of the story with the other characters such as Rabbi Benish, his wife, sons and daughter-in-laws. But female characters in the novel are presented as inferior in their nature. Focusing on this aspect, Roman Seldon writes, "women have been made inferior and oppression has been compounded by men's belief that women are inferior by nature. However, the abstract notion of equality receives lip service but demands for real equality will usually be resisted" (135). Rabbi Benish's youngest daughter-in-law Nechele is a woman brought up in a prosperous family, rich merchant. The author introduces her:

Nechele even reckoned her barrenness a virtue. Weekdays she wore silk headkerchiefs and gold earrings. Her lean figure cluttered with rings. Thin, flat-chested, with an aristocratic figure, Nechele never ceased complaining of how she had fallen into a vulgar house; her thin lips mumbled constantly, and her nose crinkled as though she suffered from the nasty Goray smells. She decorated lavishly the room given to her and her husband. (21)

How the patriarchal ideology was reigning there in the Goray can be realized through the above manipulation of Nechele. The above detail about Nechele reveals the way how male dominance has shaped the notions over female. Women are always treated as irrational, emotional and inferior. Many writers project women as either “other” or “victim”. These sorts of characterizations truly depict the society and its context. Humanists argue that men have inscribed such image of women as the “cultural cannon”. Such portrayal of women represents the history. Men and women are the by-product of the same society but a man is called a cultured being where as a woman is considered an uncultured one. Indeed, men have got the power of decision making by social favor where as women are treated as a “commodity” to be defined. It is a kind of realization of female identity in a male-dominated society. Everywhere, the elaboration of the story justifies the male ideology. We can cite another example for the same purpose, "Of Nechele it was said that she had bewitched her husband, causing him to remain in love with her and follow her false ways" (21). Goray had had a system to be cared of evil spirit. Activity of a character named Grunam reveals us, "Hurriedly, he would rap twice on each shutter with wooden mallet, as a sign that the water was to be poured out of the house's water-run to thwart evil spirits" (29). This above saying can be a representative concept of the people of Goray. Comparing

the earlier days , the lesson concludes, "But now Goray had fallen upon evil days" (32). A reader reaches for the cause naturally. Most part of the description afterwards deals about the mysterious strangers who arrives professing to be followers of sabbatai Zevi, the leader of this new Jewish sect, which converts more and more of the villagers from orthodoxy. In practice this becomes an excuse for greater and greater licentiousness. This depicts their ancestors as superstitious which has also captured the male dominated ideology. Human attempts through the so-called messenger of god Gedaliya, a woman, Mordecai Joseph or any others cross beyond the limits of human possibilities. Dark, dreadful images full of demons and damnation are frequent there in the plot.

Lesson seven entitled "Reb Eleazar Babad and His Daughter, Rechele" discloses all the curiosity of readers on how Rechele came to be lame and was brought up. Rechele was five at her mother's death. Rechele, being left alone, remained in Lublin at the home of an uncle, Reb Zeydel Ber, who was a ritual slaughterer. One remarkable hint is that Rechele is terrified of Reb Zeydel Ber who had never married and had no children. And, the novel also reveals that he wanted to marry her. A reader is safe to attribute that she might be seduced by him earlier. Or, this also can be associated with the striking statement of the novel, "She aroused sinful thoughts in men" (17).

Reb Eleazar seems utterly indifferent to his daughter Rechele. He does not want to talk about her as if there is something wrong on her daughter. He, moreover, replies to the questioners who asked about her, "Why to talk? What's the use?"(16).

First lesson clarifies as, "Rechele's behavior was strange from the beginning" (16).Rechele, as the novel proceeds, would hide under the bed when chimney sweep came, burying herself under the pile of clothing. It justifies that she possessed a

hysteric type of nature. She feared the broom. Uncle Reb Zeydel Ber snores loudly in the bedroom and feels, "The old woman smelled of burned feathers of mice"(47). This sentence touches a reader bitterly since when he/she comes to know Reb Zeydel Ber is her own heir. Women in old phase do not release from the sufferings in patriarchal society. They are blamed as witch perhaps because of their lean and thin body with weak mental state. People misinterpret their expressions, bodily movements and other gestures unreasonably. Jewish society also did not accommodate the old women but marginalized them. The case of Granny in the novel represents the plight of old women in general.

She has been identified as the mother-in-law of Reb Zeydel Ber, a ritual slaughterer and it was the house of that old Granny where Reb Zeydel Ber dwells. But the circumstance of eleventh hour of her life proves how cruel and irresponsible he was. She was in the bed breathing last yet he was longing to hear the message of her death desperately. The novel narrates, "Drawing a goose feather from his breast, he would hold it near the dying woman's nostrils to see whether she was still breathing, examine her expertly, and sigh: 'Ah, well, it's a story without an end'" (49). Rarely did anyone glance in at the dying woman. It seems it is because she was a woman, an evil figure for others. The writer describes her figure as "Old woman frequently raised upper lips in horrifying smile" (49). At the night, Granny came with blood soaked head - may be it was in her dream - it frightened her so much that it caused her severe sick. Many brought her different types of domestic medicines to chase evil spirit away. She improved but left leg continued to paralyze. Hence, her lameness is presented in its relation to dead Granny that tries to justify the dead Granny as a witch. After Reb Zeydel Ber died, she returned to her father who had already lost his wife and sons. Gossips continued about her mysterious ills in Goray. Many said that

she is driven by the power of devil. But strikingly, her own father seemed indifferent with it and replied the questioners, “well, let it be! There is no wisdom, no understanding, and no council against the god!”(53). She is suffering from the illness but she gets no care from her father. Moreover she is blamed of being guided by evil power. This reflects the position of a handicapped girl in Jewish culture. The society’s outlook over her is not guided by the reason but by the superstitions and traditional conventions.

The Jews of Poland believe that, as Christian would say, the ends of time are there, and expect the Messiah to arrive. A cult Sabbatai Zevi appears on the scene, claiming to be the Messiah. The name of god is shown to have been erased by someone. Rechele replies to Reb Itche Mates that her father lives there. Reb Itche asks her whether he was the head of the community. Rechele says, “No longer. Now he’s a rag picker”(57). And, she bursts into high-pitched laughter. Right at the point a reader can assume two aspects for the portrayal of Rechele as one is her frenzy or hysteric nature that signifies that she was really different than normal. At the same time it reveals Jewish social ideology through the following statement of the novel:

That the Jewish girl should laugh so unrestrainedly was something new to Reb Itche Mates, and he glanced at her out of the corner of his wide-set eyes, brow less and cool green, like those of the fish. Rechele’s long braids were undone, like a witch’s, full of feathers and straw. Through her disheveled hair a pair of frantic eyes smiled madly at him. It occurred to Itche Mates that there was more here than met the eye.  
(57-58)

These lines are very crucial to analyze the position of female in Jewish culture. One can easily acknowledge the cultural restrictions on female’s behavior. Similarly

the extract of the novel also discloses the blind faith of Jewish people in medieval Poland. Women are really constructed there as Simone de Beauvoir says, “One isn’t born, but rather becomes a woman” (301). Jewish feminist Gayle Rubin observes the cultural emphasis on difference between women and men as, “Far from being an expression of natural differences, exclusive gender identity is the suppression of natural similarities” (179). This version rightly resembles the context of Rechele. Jewish society did not value the women’s experience and marginalized them exerting various stereotypes.

While Reb Itche Mates suggests her to have a husband, Rechele answers him that nobody wants her unless Satan will have her. Then, she bursts into sharp laughter. It seeks to implicate the agony in her as it is natural that a young lady wishes to get married and have a husband for love and support. But it seems that her marriage is far from her reach and its thoughts give her physical and mental torture making her burn inwardly.

The text repeatedly narrates abnormally, “She bursts into sharp laughter” (58). This indicates that a girl’s laughing is not normally accepted in the society. Meanwhile, Several representatives of the cult such as Reb Itche Mates sends a proposal of marriage to Rechele as he, according to the proposal, was, “ The bridegroom , a widower, a man of no importance”(59). Rechele, afterwards, gets sick and it is associated with the Rechele’s evil spirits. A Letter, on the way, disclosed hypocrisies, artificial manner of Itche Mates and all others tried to betrothed of Itche Mates and Rechele in a feast. Despite her disagreement, Rechele was consoled. Itche Mates seems intoxicated of sex. In the rabbinic society, marriage is not the agreement based on equal dignity and existence. Jewish laws privilege the male and prenuptial agreement represents the unequal power relations between the couple. People of

bride's side are in a fear of their counter part. Reviewer Mark D Brugh views:

As these political and social disasters are played out, a young orphan, Rechele, who is insane, becomes the center of interest of the town, as she is unmarried. When a holy man, Itche Mates, arrives in Goray, he marries the unfortunate Rechele, who proceeds to be possessed by Satan and do the things that makes Linda Blair in the Exorcist look amateur. (42)

Rechele seemed in secret crying and again violent laughing. She feels suddenly down, eyes glazed, foam runs from mouth. Hence, she is presented abnormally so that she would be proved to be evil-spirit possessed woman The horrible situation frequently appears such as lit off candle, forceful storm, destructions and many other

bad omen. There is a gossip that Nechele had bewitched Rabbi Benish. It is reported that one woman had seen Nechele in secret confabulation with the old witch Kinneguend.

And, in order to bind her husband, Levi, she would have him drink the water in which she washed her breast. Nechele too represents the derogate model role of women. She is blamed of bewitching even Rabbi Benish who is the community leader of Jewish society. The detail of Nechele resembles the medieval



Jewish society. Goray becomes a place of misfortunes for Rabbi Benish . So, he too does not want to die in Goray as he revives momentarily and shout, “Take me away to Lublin. For god’s sake! I do not want to lie in the graveyard in Goray”.

Wedding procedure between Mates and Rechele reveals the Jewish male ideology explicitly. A Jewish wife is preached the ways to please her husband, to perform the purity and cleanliness and modesty. The Judaism has had such a culture that is somewhat mentioned by Shira L. Lander:

Although the Rabbis used the cultural symbols of the adulteress, they also employed socioeconomic control to enable a husband to enforce rabbinic expectations of wifeness. Peskowitz argues that the ketubbah, or “marriage settlement,” by differing payment until death or divorce, allowed the husband to control his wife’s behavior until such time. Thus, ketubbah is recast as a privilege to be earned, rather than an inalienable right. (131)

Rechele is tormented by the fearful dreams as her dead father and uncle Reb Gedaliya often appear in bloody appearance and threaten her. She falls in mysterious disease. Thus she is presented as a frenzy type of girl. Reb Gedaliya, from Sabbatai Zevi cult, appears with scandals of miraculous spiritual power and performs some wonder (mere an illusion). He is surrounded by a dense crowd of women and girls but not by men. This tends to mean that women and girls are emotional and irrational who are not guided by the reason and intellect. They lack the ability to judge and follow the scandals. Reb Gedaliya, indeed, is a licentious one though he succeeds to attract girls and women. He allows Rechele, "Rechele the angles and seraphims are envois of your noble spirit. The root of your name is Rachel and Rachel's beauty is yours"(105). Hence he allures Rechele and succeeds in his corrupt mission. This cites that they fail to judge right and wrong. And, they are so weak that temptation of praise for their beauty can easily lead them towards the wrong path.

Rechele listens several messages and instantly tells to Reb Gedaliya as if Reb Gedaliya is a prophet. An awesome voice says addressing Rechele, "Rechele, be strong of cheer! I am the Angel Sandalfon!.....the power of his combinations reaches even to heavenly mansions. From this combinations seraphin and angles twist coronets for the Devine Presences"(107). It is Rechele who experiences the influence of supernatural power time and again. And, Goray suffers a dreadful havoc. Rechele does not stir until sun rise with fears. Her ears still ring with voice, her cheeks are damp with tears, and her body is cold like one returned from the edge of the death. The novel mentions, "Some thought her in the power of an evil spirit" (108). Other followers come to see what would happen for they surmise at once that it was not ordinary occasion. The situation is instantly followed by another disaster. Hence novelist endeavors to show the relation of Rechele with evil power that causes the

sufferings in Goray. The situation grows amazingly mysterious. But so great was the confusion that no one cared the marvel. Meanwhile, Rechele, with arms and legs extended, still lays there bearing mysteries of mysteries. no one has ever heard such wonder. It was clear to all that the spirit of prophecy had entered into Rechele. It is also understood that she has been possessed by evil spirit. It can be observed through the presentation of her strength and her soul differently. She seems to struggle to speak but her strength deserts her again, and she utters a shrill wail. She has been manipulated as, “then, sighing, she grew still once more, as though her soul has deserted” (110). Regarding the dichotomy of body and soul for the presence of evil, Paul Ricoeur concedes in *The Symbolism of Evil*, "This myth which, we shall call "The myth of the exiled soul", differs from all the others in that it divides man into soul and body and concentrates on the destiny of the soul” (172-173).

Patriarchal ideology defines woman as a passive sexual object who does not deserve her own ‘self’. She does not have true existence in society as if she is a mere ‘commodity’ to be used or manipulated. In the novel, Rev Gedaliya, now ruler of Goray, settles Rechele in his house and lives with her under one roof that is not common for that society. Reb Gedaliya seems dissolute and tempted for Rechele but Rechele is manipulated in such a way that she is with no reaction at all as a passive sexual objects in the name of religion. This may be the Jewish cultural by-product developed since centuries. Roy T. Matthews and F. Dewitt Platt write:

Work was increasingly divided according to gender, with women being assigned domestic duties and subordinated and restricted within the economic, social, legal, and cultural system in Jewish social order. The changing, and often conflicting, roles for women were reflected in the Hebrew Bible and other literature, which recorded instances of women

serving as priestesses or influencing Hebrew officials, defined the qualities of a good wife, justified women's subservient status in a patriarchal order, and blamed them for human transgressions. (152)

Those who wished to please their husbands are told to have their men drink the water in which their breasts have been washed. Those with the falling sickness are told to cut nails of their hands and feet and have the nails kneaded into a lump of dough and thrown to a dog. Different rumors sweep away there based on Jewish folk convention. A concept developed as there is a remarkable increase in the number of practitioners of the evil eye. They argue for proof that their cattle stopped giving milk. In the village of maiden the peasants lure a witch into the woods, chained her to a tree and built a fire about her after stripping her of her clothes. The novel narrates, "Villagers watch the naked witch writhe and tear at her flesh in agony calling the name of Satan until the flames consumed her"(118). One remarkable aspect inherent in the rumors is that every witch practices are associated only with female. Maurice Carr in the title "My Uncle Yitazhak: a Memoir" mentions, "*Satan in Goray*, set in 17<sup>th</sup>-century Poland and describing how the remnants of Jewry after the Chmielnicki programs fall prey to rigid superstition"(30).

We generally refer these movements as "cults", unless they are successful. In many cases of millennial movements, people anticipate the immanent arrival of the New Age so strongly that they throw away their possessions and engage in dissolute behavior: singing, dancing, drinking, engaging in previously forbidden sex, and so on. So is the case in the novel. But, this has become a platform for a reader to analyze the corrupt patriarchy. On the one hand, it is the women who have been victimized by their counterparts. On the other, they have been presented as more emotional.

Although Jewish rituals are guided by Torah and Talmud, there are the considerable oral laws functioning dominantly in Jewish societies. And, rabbi uses this power socialists argue that medieval Jewish communities witnessed such practice in great deal. In case of medieval Poland, the judicature of the state was not effective and it could not supply the provision of constitution towards the ghettos. Rabbis were the only authorities to settle any cases in the community since they were the true interpreter of the Torah.

In this regard, the text narrates a touching sentence, "Reb Gedaliya and Levi released from marriage bondage to all women who had been deserted" (113). And, they instantly could get new husbands. Here why Levi enjoys such power is crucial. Levi is the son of the rabbi who was the leader of the community. Levi, however, is not a follower of his father's spiritual ideology. Moreover, he is the opponent of his father's thoughts since he joined the sabbatai Zevi cult. Yet he is required in the community as a son of a rabbi. He is the legitimate one to value and accomplish any ritual act in the society after his father returns towards Lublin. He uses the hereditary privileges that was like the power of feudal lords which reflects the 17th century.

Similarly Reb Gedaliya is a representative of Sabbatai cult who proclaims to be an angle of the god. In practice, he is dissolute and corrupt who exploits Rechele

claiming himself a healer. Their hopes to join with Messiah are in climax relating with several hopeful symbols. Rechele, at the time, almost ceases eating as a prophetess whom Reb Gedaliya comes to visit late at night. Each night angels visit her in dreams. Some seemingly magic power is shown relating to Rechele in the novel perhaps to indicate an evil power over her. Reb Gedaliya comes at night and says, "Rechele, it is mid night. The heavens are parting. The Divine

parents are coupling face to face. Rechele, be a good cheer. This is the hour of union” (121). A reader can observe the way how easily a lady is motivated and abused that tends to mean the weak standpoint of female.

Patriarchal society considered women as objects rather than human beings of flesh and blood. Experiences and feelings of women were not valued. Men did not recognize even the male-made convention if it contradicted their interests. Reb Gedaliya, an outwardly

spiritual leader, with his corrupt mission, succeeds to compel Reb Itche Mates to divorce his wife Rechele. The text narrates, “A few days later these very same men compeled Reb Itche Mates to consent to divorce his wife Rechele nor did they mind that the river of Goray had two names, and that the tradition was that no bill of divorcement could be written in the town. The next morning he stood with Rechele under wedding canopy, thus openly



demonstrating his contempt for the Talmud” (136). One remarkable aspect is that there is not shown any reaction of Rechele. She does not possess her individual self as if she were a mere commodity. This is because of Jewish religious background that has privileged the man. Judith Wegner states:

Most importantly, a Jewish woman wed by the laws of the Torah can be divorced only by her husband's act of giving her traditional bill of divorce (get). Should her husband stubbornly refuse or otherwise be unable to release her in this way, she will remain a *mesurevet* get or an *agunah*, unable to remarry. In this matter Jewish law discriminates openly and explicitly between men and women. A *mesurevet* get or *agunah* who chooses to live another man pays a heavy price. Her children by that man are considered mamzerim (bastards), and under religious law neither they nor their offspring of next ten generations

are allowed to marry Jews. In contrast married man can have children by another (unmarried) woman without legal sanction. (142)

When Goray indulges in every kind of license, it is reported that a whore was sent to Reb Gedaliya by the sect in Zamosc without the notice of his wife, Rechele. The novel exposes the women's openness excitingly more than men's involvement in the same case. This may be the shadow of common human temperament of male subordination. The sentence, "Nechele, Levi's wife, strolled about unclothed, consorted with a coachman before the eyes of all the company - and of her own husband too...." (137) can be an instance for this. Rechele can not see the holy angels appearing before her in her dreams. She lays in her canopy bed long hours every nights reciting holy names and awaiting vision. It proves her weak sentiment having dependant upon such spirituality.

Day by day she is more ruined, thoughts are barren. She does not wash her hands and recites the blessings for food and pray. Her physical charm exists no longer and suffers from fearful mysteries. Reb Gedaliya tries to console her with his own doctrines. He

manages ornaments for her so that she could be happy. Hence he underestimates a lady. Her soul is not there with her physical body. She suffers mysterious and terrifying things. She remains in a trance for several hours while she is in bed. She gradually loses all interest and curiosity in worldly affairs. She ceases reading books and bath every morning. She forgets the names of visitors. Her replies are senseless and hence she is hardly on this existing world.

This detail about Rechele seems to implicate to the evil spirit that is embedded in her. She, therefore, loses her own 'self' and evil spirit exerted over her has become more prominent day by day. Isaac Bashevis Singer, in the lesson eleven (second Part) "The Sacred and Profane" (178-182), invests his words to relate Rechele with the evil spirit more intensely. Rechele is terrified of the Profane and wants to run away frightening from several fearful images but can't since her legs are leaden and faltering. She is desperate to escape but continues to sink. The lower she sinks the darker it becomes. Meanwhile, a bearded figure, hairy and naked, wet and stinking, pursues her with a long monkey hands and open maw. He carries her up as feather for she has become weightless now and flies with her over dusk-filled streets and tall buildings through a sky of pollution. The host of airy things, half-devil and half-man runs at their backs. The thing wants to ravish her and she has no escape. Squeezing her breast and trying to force her legs apart with his bony knees, he demands hoarsely and rapidly breathing hard, "Rechele! Quick! Let me! I want to defile you!" (142) In spite of Rechele's unwillingness, he says that he has already defiled her Then he throws her down. Ricoeur defines the term defilement as, "Defilement, insofar as it is the (object) of the ritual suppression, is itself a symbol of evil. In fact, defilement is not a stain, but like a stain; it is a symbolic stain. Thus, it is the symbolism of rites of suppression" (36). She utters a bitter cry but no sound is there. She losses her memory power. The case and intension of the presentation of evil seems somewhat related with the version of Paul Ricoeur:

**Evil is something brought about now  
and something that is always already**

there: to begin is to continue. It is this being seduced that symbolizes in the externality of unclean contact. It is essential that evil be in somewhere undergone: identification of human evil and as pathos, a "passion". The third schema is the schema of 'infection.' (156)

Patriarchal myths of women presume the false essence. Male-made images of women always marginalized women as 'other'. Jewish culture institutionalized the men's centrality and their dominance over women. Gayle Rubin says, "Gender difference is used in display of Jewish life to construct male dominance and to marginalize women" (181). Isaac Bashevis Singer has chosen a female character for evil spirit to suit the then society. Rechele is increasingly obvious to have been

possessed by the evil spirit. The detail of Goray proceeds that Goray suffers famine with her horrible misfortunes. All level of people suffers devastatingly. Nature is in opponent for Goray. Death silence could be realized there. From child to old, no one is in their duty. All seem irrational. Rechele has been impregnated by Satan and she confesses herself to her husband as how she was violated. Evil has reigned everywhere. A destroyer demon grew in her womb. But Reb Gedaliya would not believe Rechele even she has told him that she is no longer menstruated. He, later, avoids all intercourse and leaves her alone. He even drives Chenkele, Rechele's fellow, away and takes another servant girl. This justifies the existed male sentiment over female. The novel narrates:

A black, tall, fiery-eyed with a long tail Satan visits Rechele to torment her. She is powerless to move. She suffers extraordinary torture because of evil that causes severe pain in different parts of her body. She vomits reptiles, bark like a dog. She can't open her mouth and major problem lies in her throat. Reb Gedaliya tries to conceal the odd behaviors of Rechele. (146)

Towards the last phase of the novel, the author of the 'The Dybbuk of Goray' concludes the fiction of the novel disclosing all mysteries but it too accepts some

mysteries regarding the Rechele's case. How evil spirit entered her implicates that she has been possessed by it not merely this time but earlier too. The *Dybbuk* depicts the earlier situation of Rechele just around her leg problem, "But at once her garments fell from her body for the evil spirit cast them off: And the strength in her limbs was unnaturally great so that even the men could not prevail and the thing was a marvel to all and a mystery indeed" (149). This is the only

acceptance with no reason that lets a ground to define a female character as a mystery.

After evil spirit leaves her, Rechele lays on the earth like a dead for her strength was supplied from the evil. Evil spirit visits her and tries to lure to enter in her again as, “As long as I dwelt in thee thou were in good health: And now art thou sickly and poorly: But let me return to thee body and remove the amulets from thee throat and I shall do thee pleasure” (158). It earlier has justified



that the holy thing caused her much suffering as, “of needle in the flesh of living man” (153). Evil spirit has left her necessarily means that she is no longer alive. A group of Women come to Rechele and find her dead. Hence the fiction ends though other some fabrics of story about Itche Mates and Gedaliya goes on little. Hence Rechele is manipulated as evil carrier as an appropriate character to suit the then Polish Jewish society for she is a woman. George rumors

flow in the village repeatedly but almost all were on female characters for negative manipulation. Novelist describe the gossip of Goray, “Everyone knew that Nechele, the wife of Levi, received men in her house sat up the past midnight with them, singing prurient songs” (114). Hence, women are indicated and expressed in exciting fashion but involvement of men in the same case remains silent. Their position is constructed.

## Perkins and Barbara Perkins give a light on the background of the book and author as:

Four years as a teenager in the village of Bilgoray gave him the setting, though not the time period, for his first novel, *Satan in Goray* (Yiddish, 1935, English 1955), an account of warfare with the Ukrainians and ensuing civil strife in 17<sup>th</sup>-century Poland. A brief enrollment in a rabbinical seminary in Warsaw was followed by twelve more years in that city, proofreading for a Yiddish Literary Journal and composing his early fiction, before he immigrated to the United States in 1955. (231)

For tragic theme of *Satan in Goray*, it is a tragedy of that Jewish society where female has been portrayed as a tool of evil spirit. It is definitely a shadow of that Jewish society on which background Isaac Bashevis Singer has skillfully architected the fiction by selecting a feeble and handicapped girl for evil spirit. The reader may assume it wonderful to some extent in term of its dreams and images. Yet the plot proves that it is realistic depiction of male-dominated society and its common temperaments.

#### IV. Conclusion

The novel *Satan in Goray* by Isaac Bashevis Singer exposes the Jewish male ideology of mid-seventeenth century. It is written in the context of 17<sup>th</sup>-century Polish Jewish society. Mid-17<sup>th</sup> century, eighteen years after the famous Chmelnicki massacre, is the periodical context which had caused the heavy destruction of life and property in Poland. The novel, therefore, captures the horror psychology of that circumstance. Pathetic portrayal of the main character of the novel named Rechele easily stimulates a reader to raise an issue of the condition of women. The societal scenario of the novel is heavily rooted in the Jewish ritual practices. It is believed that her evil power as her inborn quality causes various misfortunes in the remote Polish town, Goray. Personification of Rechele as a force of evil is the central thing that causes the downfall of the people of Goray and brings total chaos there. All incidents of Goray are dreadful and mysterious and they are all related with Rechele as a cause. Hence, presentation of her character as evil-spirit carrier is a crucial issue for a reader. The novel tells the story from the perspective of one medieval Jewish town and it reflects the then societal scenario in which male ideology can obviously be realized as dominant power.

Several Jewish feminists have justified the patriarchal nature of Jewish society citing their traditions. Jewish have been heavily suppressed in their culture. Rechele, in this novel, represents a Jewish woman. She has been ill-treated in her day-today life. She is the cause of all misfortunes in Goray. Goray never gets release from such misfortunes until she is alive. Her father, a rabbi of that community, too accepts mysteries in her as a god punishment. Hence, she is given a negative and marginal status by all.

The plight of other characters reinforces same thing. Strong belief of the people in witch and evil has contributed to strengthen the patriarchy since only the women are to be blamed of nonsense things. Obviously it is the by-product of medieval traditional society. Villagers gossip on the issue of evil and witch if they find any defeat in Goray. It reveals the tradition and outlook of Goray people. Jewish tradition has a belief in evil eyes and witches and it was strong in earlier days. So, Singer rightly depicts the convention existed in the Jewish society. Nechele, in the novel, is accused of bewitching villagers. These all contribute to make an assertion that the novel reflects the Jewish male ideology. Almost all female characters in the novel are portrayed for negative reference. People's belief for Rechele as evil and Nechele as witch is a citation to know the societal outlook on women. It seems that women are the things to receive the burden of blames for any defects in Goray. Entire activities of female characters, primarily Rechele, are always under suspicions. Her sickness is defined in a mysterious way. In the light of these, the researcher has made a justification that the novel is the reflection of 17-th century Jewish society.

Rechele is accused of provoking of sinful thoughts in men and it necessarily implicates that one ruins instantly if he/she comes in her touch. The society sees something wrong in her laughing too. Hence, females are the commodity to be defined in the society. Suppression on female has lied in their culture and conventions. Females have no space of their freedom and they have no ground of rights. The novel proves that the Jewish traditional societies are full of negative images and stereotypes of women.

In the context of the seventeenth century Poland, the text consists exploited images of women. Jewish conventional practices are the bases of the fictional plot of the novel. It is obvious that Jewish rituals harbor the strong patriarchy. Wedding

ceremony, seven days of benediction, rituals of Sabbath occupy the major portion of the novel. People search knots in Rechele's shawl when there is any defect in Goray. It may remind the old tradition to the modern Jews. And, these all help to know the male dominance in their history. The detail of famous Chleminicki massacre of 1748 and 1949 has provided a historical ground. Hence, the novel has become historical encompassing the historical detail and the common temperaments of the then people. A reader gets a lively knowledge of how Judaism posits a man in center and pushes a woman to the margin from the novel. The doctrines of Talmud and Torah have guided the society entirely. And, rabbis use the privileges of interpreting the doctrines according to which all cases of the community are settled. There is no influence of state's judiciary in the traditional Jewish communities. People quickly believe in any rumor about magic, evil and witch. They are utterly conventional. These all strengthen the statement that the society was heavily patriarchal. Strong effect of shtetl life experienced in Bilgoray enabled the novelist to make realistic depiction. Cruel male treatments on females are the touching aspects of the novel. Thus, Singer has successfully copied a male dominated world of 17-th century Poland.

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