Singer's novels succinctly portray the binary opposition of faith and doubt, sacred and the profane, piety and sin, hunger of the body and hunger of the soul. They also contain in them a strong note of protest that his protagonists and other characters feel about the sufferings of the innocent and the pious. Singer refers to protest as man's basic right. In Love and Exile, his autobiographical trilogy, Singer talks about the legitimacy of the protest:

Man had every right to protest against the violent acts of life. Man wasn't obliged to thank God for all the plagues and catastrophes that assailed him... This ethic of protest, I told myself, existed in all people, in all animals, and in everything that lived and suffered ... [Love and Exile, p 44].

However, the terms 'ethics' and 'protest' need explication. Oxford Learner's Wordfinder Dictionary defines the word 'ethics' as "moral rules or principles of behaviour for deciding what is right or wrong", while the term 'protest' is explained as "something that you think is unfair and that you want to complain or protest about". The expression 'The Ethics of Protest' would ordinarily mean the grounds or rationale for complaints or grievance. Joseph C Landis in his essay, "IB Singer - Alone in the Forest", defines the ethics of protest as follows: "the ethics of protest was only a name and frame for a continuous inner conflict, for a state of constant warfare with God and man. It neither cured him of his desperate need to believe nor did it provide a rationale for an uncompromising faith ...".
To understand clearly the ethics of protest that Singer deals with in his novels, an understanding of the formative years of his life is essential. Substantial information about the influences and situations that shaped and moulded Singer's Weltanschauung is available in his autobiographical work *Love and Exile* and the memoir *In My Father's Court*. Both these documents reveal how Singer's parents set before him indelible images of unswerving faith in God and also a rational attitude to life. The former he inherited from his father, and the latter from his mother. In his appraisal of Singer's *In My Father's Court*, Paul Kresh, in his work, *Isaac Bashevis Singer: The Magician of West 86th Street*, observes:

"... Isaac recounts anecdotes about his father's bethdin, a blend of court of law, synagogue, and home of study along with other tales about his childhood in Warsaw with typical economy and a fierce attention to physical detail... these, episodes hold up the bright illumination of a modern understanding to the events of a vanished past..."

*In My Father's Court* has scores of interesting anecdotes of day-to-day life that Singer was exposed to. His father, as it was a common practice in the Jewish society in those days, worked both as a rabbi - a religious and spiritual leader, and also as a judge. He heard the complaints of the people and settled their cases of divorce, monetary disputes and other matters of litigation. Right from the early childhood, it had become clear to Singer that though his father handled the worldly cases in his Din Torah, the court, he was basically an unworldly man committed whole-heartedly to the spiritual teachings of the Torah and the Talmud. For his father, the world itself was 'tref' - 'unclean'. The memoir abounds in such anecdotes that led to strengthening of Singer's faith in the honesty of the common man, the unfathomable complexities of human heart especially with reference to man-woman relationship. The memoir also has instances that deal with poverty, starvation and miserable times during the World War I.
Amidst all these what strikes the reader's attention is the image of Singer as the young narrator. The kind of questions that he raised before his father with a hope that he would get convincing answers for them: "but how did he (father) know there was a God, since no one saw Him? But if He did not exist, who had created the world, how could a thing give birth to itself? And what happened when something died? Was there really heaven and hell . . .?" [In My Father's Court, p 139].

His father, who rejected the thought of doubt, had on some other occasion offered him the following explanation: "as long as the soul is imprisoned within the body, it cannot fully grasp the words above... But everything is just. Man was created in the image of God . . ." [In My Father's Court, p 73].

It is Singer's scepticism that underlines his attitude of protest. His autobiography known as autobiographical trilogy Love and Exile includes in it three separate books: A Little Boy in Search of God, A Young Man in Search of Love and Lost in America. Of these, the first two contain ample material which sheds light on his ethics of protest. There are passages which reveal his painful state - his being torn between faith and doubt. He admits that the seeds of doubt and scepticism were sown by his elder brother Joshua Singer and the worldly books he had read. But what strengthened his scepticism was the sufferings of mute creatures, man's cruelty to man and to animals. Once when Ezriel saw his mother kill a fish for Sabbath, he felt extremely shocked. His mother in justification told him that by killing the fish and making a blessing over it, the spirit is elevated. She drew his attention to the belief that sometimes sinful soul of some human being enters the fish and the fish's death is an atonement for the sins of the soul.
Since Singer was not convinced, he asked her another question, "how about the fish that are eaten by Gentiles or by sinners? And how about the pigs that are killed, scorchèd in hot water 'while still alive? What spirit was atoned in them?'" [Love and Exile, p xxii]. What he could not reconcile himself to was the concept of an omnipotent God, a benevolent and merciful one in whose presence cruelties in nature and to men went unpunished. The indifference of God in face of starvation, persecution and pogroms was something that utterly shocked him. This led him to have a stance of protest. Landis, presenting Singer's dilemma in an artistic manner, observes that "unable to deny God yet equally unable wholly to accept Him, he sought a kind of equilibrium in a stance of continuous protest ...." This fact is borne out by his own confession in Love and Exile. In the words of Singer:

I believe in God, I fear Him, yet I cannot love Him - not with my whole heart and soul as the Torah commands nor with the amour dei intellectuais that Spinoza demands. Nor can I deny God as the materialists do ... I had one might say, created my own basis for an ethic - not a social ethic nor a religious one but an ethic of protest ... The person protests not only when he is personally wronged but also when he witness or thinks about the suffering of others. If God wants or feels compelled to torture His creatures, that is His affair. The true protester expresses his protest by avoiding doing evil to the best of his ability. [Love and Exile, pp 44-45].

It is interesting to note that Singer thinks about his ethics of protest with reference to any person who is morally awakened. The same idea of protest he extends to the Jews and Jewishness as well. To him life-style of a pious Jew itself was a sort of a protest or bore out his philosophy of protest. Keeping this in mind Singer observes:

The Jew personified the protest against the injustices of nature and even those of the creator. Nature wanted death, but this Jew opted for life; nature wanted licentiousness, but the Jew asked for restraint; nature wanted war, but this Jew, particularly, the Diaspora Jew (the highly developed Jew) sought peace. The Ten Commandments were in themselves a protest against this laws of nature... Because the Jew
went against nature, it despised him and took revenge upon him. But the victory lay on the side of the Jew. Even if he had to wage war against God, the Jew could not desist.... [Love and Exile, pp 64-65].

It is this tone of defiance, and scepticism that is the common features of Singer's protagonists. Like Singer, his protagonists, by and large, have a tendency to question the ways of God to man and also their ways to Him. They are also well aware that the defiance would be a lasting one. Landis sums up this attitude precisely when he says: "To deny God can be final, to defy Him is forever". 5

Whenever Joshua questioned God's intentions and sought an explanation from his father saying how the merciful God could be a silent witness to pogroms against Jews, his father would try to assure him by referring to Free Will and Free Choice as God's gift to man. Man could make his choice of either 'good' or 'evil'. And about those innocent who were killed, his father described them as martyrs.

What pained Singer most was the excessive cruelty he witnessed around him in the world. It was not just the cruelties that were perpetrated on man by man but by the sufferings of the animals too. It is not that he bore any grudge against the gentiles for their persecution of the Jews. On the contrary, he ascribed this tendency to the principle of Might is Right or kill or be killed. He found the same pattern even in the Bible. The whole history of the Israelites was full of wars and assassinations. One day the Philistines killed twenty thousand Israelites. The other day the Israelites slaughtered thirty thousand Philistines and so on.

Another factor which was responsible for violence and war seems to be a psychological one. Singer's personal experience of life revealed to him that human beings are, in general, constantly in need of adventure, change, risks, danger
and challenge. Probably it is the fear of boredom rather than the fear of death that goads men to action.

The ethics of protest occupies an important dimension in Singer's novels. It is also appropriate and interesting to see how this ethics of protest places the protagonist in a state of exile wherein he cannot wholly embrace the one or reject wholly the other. Singer's family sagas, The Family Moskat (1950) together with The Manor (1967) and its sequel The Estate, form a trilogy. They represent the story of the disintegration of Polish Jewry from the insurrections of 1863 until the Nazi conquests of 1939. Edward Alexander, in his work Isaac Bashevis Singer, describes The Manor and The Estate as works that "deal in large part with the fate of those who, in the interests of modernity on politics or science or universalism, cut themselves off from this tree of life (Sic Torah) and its nourishment". Here an attempt has been made to trace the ethics of protest in the characters of The Manor and The Estate, who exhibit the tendency of deviation from the righteous path and rebel against the traditional way of living. Analysing these novels from this angle, one is face-to-face with the conflicting ideas and viewpoints that create turmoil in the minds of the protagonists and others and continue to torment them for a longer period till they arrive at some decision.

II

Before tracing the ethics of protest in IB Singer's The Manor and The Estate, it becomes necessary to have a fair idea of the historical background against which all the strands of the narrative unfold. In his article "The Historical Novel: Some Postulates", Murray Baumgarten aptly defines the tasks which a historical
novel attempts to perform:

If history is now concerned of as a culture of a particular time and place as it manifests itself in the texture and life of an entire people then the writer tests the ideals of institutions and cultures by the realities of historical events and crises through the medium of imagined representative characters in typical conflict.

The event with which the entire Polish society undergoes a change, especially the Jewish society, is the unsuccessful insurrection of Polish landlords in 1863 against the authority of the Russian Czar. Singer in the preface of The Manor takes a note of the rise of the Jews and their participation in building up a prosperous Poland. He points out the impact of the industrialisation and modernisation on the well-organised Jewish society. The preface refers to the process of disintegration that affects the world of the Jews and the Gentiles. Jews, who until 1863 for the most part still lived in a ghetto atmosphere, now began to play an important role in the socio-economic conditions of the society. In the preface of The Manor, Singer describes the change as follows:

the period was influenced by spiritual and intellectual ideas - Socialism and nationalism, Zionism and assimilationism, nihilism and anarchism, suffragetism, atheism, the weakening of the family bond ...
[The Manor, p 7].

Jampol, a small Polish town connected with Warsaw, occupies an important place. The Count of Jampol, who along with other Polish nobility had participated in the rebellion, is banished to Siberia. His son Lucian who had also actively participated in the insurrection, escapes and lives incognito. The countess and her daughter Felicia are left in Jampol. The whole property of the Count is confiscated along with the Manor. The change of political power provides new opportunities of economic advancement to the Jews of Jampol living an isolated life on the outskirts of the town. Calman, the leader of the Jewish community of
Jampol succeeds in getting a lease over the Manor from the Duke of the Czar. He, along with other members of his family, moves into the new premises. Other Jews also leave their isolated living places known as the Sands and settle down in the town of Jampol itself. Thus their movement from the periphery to the centre affects their life-style to a great extent.

Calman, a god-fearing Jew, experiences a number of complications in his simple life with the increase in the volume of his business. His lumber business, limestone quarry, and farming leave him no time for his family or his own self. Calman with his changed financial position succeeds in getting his daughters married into respectable families of rabbis and businessmen. Only Miriam Lieba gives him a terrible shock. She elopes with Lucian, the Count's son, and thus marries a Gentile. The eldest one Jochebed is married to Mayor Joel, the son of Reb Ezekiel of Warsaw. The second daughter Shaindel is married to Ezriel, the son of Reb Menachem, the rabbi of Jampol. The Youngest one Tsipele gets linked up with the famous family of rabbis at Marshinov— a great centre of Hassidism. Tsipele is married to Jochanan, the son of Temerel, the daughter of the rabbi of Marshinov.

In The Manor, the story of Calman's family is prominently projected. Singer shows how Calman is gradually established more and more in the worldly affairs and leaves behind his simple and pious life. In the earlier stages the external changes in dress and outward appearance in Calman's life are emphasised. Besides them, there are references to the inner conflict that he suffers from leading to the loss of his mental peace. Thus Calman, the pious Jew, turns into a worldly man. He gradually loses his identity as a Jew. After a particular period, Calman realises his mistakes and then decides to regain his former state. This forms the central
This town of Marshinov plays an important role in the lives of the Jews with all its religious activities. It therefore enjoys a central position in the novels. It is the centre of Hassidism, a mystical sect to which a large part of the Polish Jewry is connected.

Before discussing the impact of Marshinou and its religion activities, it would be worthwhile to examine the term Hassidism in its historical background. The New Standard Jewish Encyclopaedia describes Hassidism as a religion and social movement founded by Israel Bal Shem Tou (1699-1761) in Volhynia and Padoha. He taught that all are equal before the Almighty (the ignorant no less honoured than the learned) that purity of heart was superior to study and then devotion to prayer and the commandments was to be encouraged but ascetic practices eschewed. Everything perceived is an illusive cover for divinity. Evil is merely a cover for good and all evil will eventually be turned into good. A basic premise is that evil desire can only be overcome by joy, and not by melancholy.

The central point on which Hassidism is focused is the doctrine of devekut. Discussing it in The Messianic Idea in Judaism and Other Essays on Jewish spirituality, Gershom Scholem says:

Throughout Cabalistic literature devekut is frequently mentioned as the highest ideal of the mystical life. In general Hebrew usage, devekut only means attachment or deviants. But since the Thirteenth Century, it has been used by the mystics in the sense of close and most intimate communion with God.

Defining a "Hassid", Isaac Horovitz, as quoted in Gershon Scholem's work The Messianic Idea in Judaism, says: "He who acts in piety towards God and
gives pleasure to his Creator and of whose intention is bent on clearing to Him and thereby becoming a chariot of God."9

The rabbi of Marshinov seems to be a Hassid. His followers visit him on festivals like Rosh Hashana, Pentecost or Yom Kippur. For them, a visit to Marshinov is a break from their routine activities of business and an opportunity to rejuvenate their spirituality. Thus Marshinov, with its all mystical and religious activities becomes the most important locale in this novel and the centre of Hassidism.

The Estate concentrates mainly on the material advancement that Ezriel, the son-in-law of Calman has made. Ben Siegel describes Ezriel's progress precisely and effectively: "With the years Ezriel outpours both his Hassidic past and his dowdy wife. He finally becomes a successful neurologist, only to learn that science offers no more 'truth' or certainty than does religious faith..."11 The Estate also underlines Ezriel's gradual distancing from his Jewish life that results in the loss of identity he suffers from. It is also made clear how he tries to search for his identity by going back to the folds of Judaism. The Estate also contains stories of all those characters who are introduced in The Manor. The Estate, besides taking Ezriel's story further up, also describes the stories of Calman and Clara, Clara and Zipkin, Olga and Ezriel, Lucian, and Wallenberg. It also throws light on the attitude of the third generation of the Jews towards Judaism, anti-semitism etc., they are Joziek, the sons of Ezriel, Zadok the son of Jochanan the Rabbi of Marshinov. They also have their way of protest.

Singer juxtaposes the emancipated Jews with the traditional ones and highlights the marked difference in their life-styles. Both The Manor and The Estate deal
with the theme of disintegration of the Jewish society in general. They also show
that some emancipated Jews, after having been disillusioned with modern ways
of life, move towards their religion and cultural roots. Nili Wachtel has provided
insights into the predicament of the Jews:

Singer portrays men who are between faiths. Having freed themselves
from the bonds of God and community they have also freed them­selves from their identities. With their God and their community
they knew who they were and what they were expected to do: nor
they know nothing as certain. They are disoriented, ambivalent. they
feel a sense of inner fragmentation . . .

The loss of identity and search for it is presented by Singer through a number of
Jewish characters. Calman and Clara belong to the first generation; Ezriel belongs
to the second one; while Zadok, Joziek and Misha belong to the third one. All
these characters either deviate from the traditional path or revolt against it. An
attempt is made here to analyse the predicament of Calman, Ezriel, Clara and
Zadok.

Calman's expanding business does add to his material wealth but it also at the
same time adds to his mental worries. Calman's daily life is disturbed. He has to
stay away from his family to live in a forest in a small hut with a Gertile maid­
servant named Antosia. The nature of his business compels him to change his
dressing style. He has to switch over to a short gabardine coat. He has to engage
Lithuanian Jews who speak Russian for maintaining accounts. These modern
Jews, it is believed, contaminate the traditional living style of the Jews. Calman
is censured for his changed appearance and the life style as well : "he built a hut
in the middle of the forest and took two dogs and a gun along for protection ... 
since a long gabardine was awkward, he adopted a short jacket ... [The Manor,
p 23].
Even the modern and emancipated Jews are not spared. The narrator's voice is critical of their presence in the Jewish society: "These strangers, who were beardless and wore gentile clothes considered themselves enlightened but the town found them heretical..." [The Manor, p 52]. Calman, though aware of the precarious situation he is in, has reached a point from where retreat is rather impossible. It gradually dawns upon him that he was "the captive and not the master of his fortune". [The Manor, p 55].

As an indulgent father Calman himself is responsible for Miriam Lieba's elopement. It is he who buys her modern Polish novels. He allows her to have a say in the choice of her life-partner. When she elopes with Lucian, it is a great shock to Calman and the members of the family. Calman considers her as good as dead.

Out of his greed for money, Calman wants to use his relationship with the modern Jew Kaminer and his widowed daughter Clara for the renewal of the lease and contract. In this process he finds Clara's physical charms irresistible and thinks of marrying her. He is also impressed by Clara's knowledge of the business world. Over and above, he has a strong desire for a male child who could say 'Kaddish' after his death. Despite the disapproval of his relatives, Calman decides to marry Clara. He is extremely elated when Clara gives birth to a male child. However, the mood of elation does not last long. Contrary to his wishes, Clara decides to bring the son up in a modern style while Calman wants him to be brought up in the traditional style. Thus, for Calman, his marriage with Clara turns out to be a source of misery and pain rather than that of happiness. He sends Zipkin, the tutor, away from his house against Clara's wishes.

To replenish his dwindling faith Calman visits Marshinov, the centre of Hassidism.
It is here he experiences a sense of solace. He participates in the religious activities and rituals. He realises that the crisis that he suffers from is due to his association with Clara and the worldly affairs. Once he breaks away from her, he experiences mental peace that he had lost. Leaving the responsibility into the hands of his son-in-law, Mayor Joel, Calman devotes his time to the study of the scriptures and to the activities of social welfare. Though at times he feels strong sexual urge, he resolves not to surrender to it by going back to Clara.

Besides Calman's story, the story of Ezriel occupies a central position. It aptly illustrates the ethics of protest. The Manor, the Bildungsroman of Ezriel, is juxtaposed with Calman's story. One comes across the marked difference in their attitude to religion and to modern ways of life. The similarity is in the process of deviation and then conscious efforts both of them make to regain their lost identity. Being a son of a rabbi Ezriel is well-versed in religious books. But he is also exposed to secular books whose teaching is in conflict with what is stated in the holy books of Judaism. Voicing his protest against the inconsistencies inherent in the religious books as well as in religious practices, Ezriel greatly shocks his father who expects from him a complete obedience to them. The violence that one commits to mute creatures is something that Ezriel finds dissatisfactory. He observes: "Does a live carp suffer agonies when it is scaled and cut to pieces for the Sabbath meal?" [The Manor, p 29]. He fails to understand the widening gap between the rich and the poor. He asks, "why are some people poor and others richer?" [The Manor, p 29].

The Scriptures say that the Lord is invisible. At some other place they declare that He had been seen by the enlightened. Having come under the influence of the secular books, there is no room for Ezriel to believe in things beyond the experience of the senses. He is so rational that he refuses to believe in dybbuk
and evil spirits. Expressing his scorn over irrational beliefs Ezriel comments: "Science concerns itself only with the visible, with things that can be weighed and measured ..." [The Manor, p 34].

Like Singer, Ezriel believes in the existence of God but is reluctant to believe in irrational things. Like other enlightened Jews, Ezriel is worried about the fate of the Polish Jews who had not shown any signs of change while their counterparts in other countries had modernised themselves. He ruminates over the adamant attitude of the traditional Jews: "The fanaticism of Polish Jews is too preposterous for words. While the rest of Europe is learning, creating, making progress, they remain bogged in ignorance ... I must help these people emerge from darkness ..." [The Manor, p 39].

Wallenbergh, the rich assimilated Jew in Warsaw, who enjoys great amount of respect of both the Jews and the Gentiles, holds the Hassidic movement responsible for the backwardness of the Polish Jews and advises Ezriel to become a modern man. Accordingly, Ezriel gets his hair cut and beard trimmed and tries to look modern. He takes excessive pride in his attainment when he feels he is in love with Olga, a doctor's widow. He experiences a sense of freedom and thrill because they set him apart from the traditional Jew. This event he considers is a bold step in modernising himself. He feels: "I am a doctor, I am carrying on an affair, what could be more European than that? I've gone pretty far since Jampol ..." [The Manor, pp 383-384]. The more modernised Ezriel becomes, the sharper becomes his sense of shame for things related to Jews and Jewishness. He, at times, suffers from the sense of shame for his wife Shaindel, for she is not a modern lady and hence not worthy of being taken to a party.

In spite of his best efforts to become happy by embracing modern ways Ezriel
feels that the desired results have eluded him. The more sincere his efforts are the more frustrating are the results. Some of the setbacks he encounters in his life are:

a) His wife Shaindel goes mad and he who as a physician claims to cure the mental diseases of others, fails to cure her.

b) His own son Joziek, unable to put up with the anti-Semitic feelings, decides to leave for Palestine.

c) Without his knowledge, his daughter Zina associates herself with revolutionary activities and acts as weapon-carrier.

d) His beloved Olga, after having received financial help and support from Wallenberg, behaves coolly like an ordinary woman, full of vanities.

e) He finds his youngest son Misha's situation unbearable because of the insults hurled at him by Kolia, Olga's son for his being a Jew.

All such circumstances compel him to reconsider the situation he is in. What choice should he go for? Whether he should continue to be a modern secular Jew in face of the painful experiences or he should go back to the fold of Judaism and be a Hassidim. His visit to Marshinov brings about a change in his attitude to the traditional Jews and Judaism.

His conscience tells him in clear words that "If religion was opium, as they say, it was the opiate most suited to the Jewish soul. Jews had been dreaming over the pages of the Torah for 2000 years. These were the noble dreams at least, not bloody nightmares . . ." [The Estate, p 200].

When his beloved Olga's daughter Natasha elopes, Olga is in a disturbed state of mind. She needs some solace. Ezriel discusses with her his views about the
purpose of life, and what according to him was the purpose of religion too:

he neither believed in revelation nor had faith in religious traditions or dogmas. Man must continuously seek God. The entire history of man was one great search for God. But in addition, man must also serve God. When he ceased to serve God, he served tyrants. Undoubtedly Judaism had come closest in the search for God ..." [The Estate, p 200].

He also explains to her the importance of the struggle of the Jews for a homeland. The statement expresses his belief in the pronouncement of the Old Testament: "But the Jews still struggled to return to the land of their ancestors. The fact alone proved that the Old Testament contained divine truths". [The Estate, p 221].

It is only after having gone too far in the modern way of living, Ezriel is able to see the Jewish way of life in a detached manner. It is this distancing that enables him to have a perspective to critically appreciate it and to have a better understanding of it. Ezriel who had not considered Zionism favourably finds it worthy of respect. He compares his lot with that of his son's who had gone to Palestine and settled there. He finds Joziek better placed. He takes pride in him: "Joziek was not religious but he had remained a Jew. Now he even wrote in Hebrew and signed his letters Uri Joseph. He had married a Jewish girl. His children would be educated in Hebrew School ... he would see his son and witness at firsthand what was being done in Palestine ..." [The Estate, p 223]

Like Ezriel, Zadok, the son of the Rabbi Jochanan of Marshinov, had also rebelled against the traditional lifestyle of the Jews. While talking with Zadok Ezriel draws his attention to the spiritual loss of the Jews in the beginning of modernism. He expresses his disillusionment at it: "But where is our progress? We had a spiritual life, now we are spiritually naked". [The Estate, p 304]. A sense of
guilt gnaws at his heart for what he does in the name of treating patients suffering from nervous ailments. He also tells Zadok about the increased rate of mental maladies that a modern man suffers from. His insight into the workings of a man's psyche reveals to him such truths:

What is called nerves is a moral illness. I cannot forget what my mother, may she rest in peace, used to say: "Satan has a new name: nerves". Our grandfathers and grandmothers were not nervous, although they were hounded and tormented. Evil for them was not a sickness but a temptation ..." [The Estate, p 305].

Ezriel does not want his son Misha to suffer from loss of identity as he had. He wants him to be brought up in such a manner so that he can feel himself to be a part of the Jewish culture. Ezriel does not approve of Olga's upbringing of Misha, and he says, "She's bringing Misha up to hate Jews and everything Jewish. I cannot allow this. Even if all religions are false, why reject one's own and accept somebody else's ..." [The Estate, p 305].

Thus Ezriel makes up his mind to bring an end to this relationship before it can cause an irreparable damage to his son's personality. Ezriel, who hitherto had been convinced of the discriminatory behaviour of the gentiles towards the Jews becomes so sensitive to insults hurled at Misha that he reacts sharply to them: "Kolia keeps telling Misha that we are God-killers. When they quarrel, he calls him 'dirty-Jew'" [The Estate, p 305].

To safeguard Misha's future Ezriel ultimately decides to take Misha to Marshinov. He meets the rabbi, Jochanan and makes his intentions clear to him. "Rabbi, I brought him here. I want him to become a Jew". [The Estate, p 308]. He further explains to him his feeling of disillusionment. He also apprises him of the hollowness of the modernised secular world. When asked by the Rabbi whether
he had seen the truth, Ezriel replies: "Not completely. But I saw their lie". [The Estate, p 308]. Calman, during his stay in Marshinov, like his father-in-law, experiences a sense of belongingness which he had not experienced for a long time. It is this sense of belongingness that fills up his heart. The sense of alienation that he had experienced for a long time is gone. His identification with the rest of the Hassidim is presented as follows: "Ezriel felt for the first time in years that he was not alone". [The Estate, p 308]. He sees the Jews in a different light. He finds in the Jews and in their life style something positive which he had not come across in the modern life. Ezriel praises the Jews for not being the victims of depression and melancholy as the rest of the world is. Despite their poverty and other problems the Jews know the secret of happiness which is due to some inner power. The Jews in Marshinov exuded positive vibrations to which Ezriel is a witness:

In Marshinov, there was joy. Eyes shine, faces glowed ... Ezriel did not see in them the symptoms of uncertainty, over indulgence ... But instead of becoming degenerate, sinking into melancholy, drunkenness, immorality - they celebrated, recited the Psalms, rejoiced with happiness that could only come from the soul. [The Estate, p 310].

It is the experiential dimension of identity that both Ezriel and Misha realise with. Getting rid of their loneliness both of them feel a strong bond of affinity with the people and the place as well. Misha's determination to be a part of the Jewish society is expressed beautifully in the following conversation:

Ezriel: Do you want to remain here or go back to Warsaw?
Misha: Remain here.
Ezriel: For how long?
Misha: a thousand years ..." [The Estate, p 311].

For Misha, Warsaw with its anti-senitism is not a suitable place to live in. Ezriel also has the same feeling and he decides to quit.
Before leaving Marshinov, Ezriel has a long meeting with Jochanan, the rabbi. He lays bare his heart to the rabbi with a hope to find mental peace. Singer presents the scene wherein Ezriel's role changes from a psychiatrist to a patient. He relates his problems to the rabbi. When he listens to the word of wisdom that the rabbi tells him, Ezriel comes to grasp the secret of Judaism. In the light of the discussion, he ponders over the need of the soul as well:

Why? Because the soul yearned for as much power as the body. It craved freedom from mental bondage but could not achieve it. Even to acquire some freedom, the soul must struggle constantly. Jewishness is based on compromise between body and soul, not on war between them. [The Estate, p 318].

While returning to Warsaw, Ezriel decides to travel with the Hassidim by the third class, though he has a first class ticket. It is not that his mind is totally free from doubts. There are a few doubts that still intrigue him. Even while he is in Marshinov and participates in the religious activities, Ezriel's mind is not free from doubts. He is reminded of the contradiction in the Torah which says, "Thou shall not kill and yet there were commandments on how to liquidate entire nations, how to plunder, burn, even rape ...." [The Estate, p 314].

He also has a feeling that he could not believe in revelations. It is as good as relying on hearsay of religion authority. Doubts still persist when thinks: "Perhaps there had been no Moss, no miracles. The Torah was merely a book ... God was eternally silent if He existed, was there a method for finding Him? How - a priori, a posterior? ... " [The Estate, p 315].

Ezriel analyses his situation and poses a pointed question to his ownself about his arrival to Marshinov which express his attitude of protest clearly. He asks:
Why had he come in the first place? Had it been to escape estrangement, impiety, a daughter who hid a revolver under her mattress, a wife who arranged balls for lechers and oppressors, patients who deceased their husbands and wanted only to have more enjoyment at someone else's expense? Or to find the way to a mute God whose nature is unknown... He, the Almighty, had kept silent in times of idolatry, slavery, wars, plagues, tortures?... [The Estate, p 315].

However, he identifies his fate with all those common Jews who suffered all insults and mockery with great courage and patience. The feeling of shame that he once experienced is not there. The journey back to Warsaw from Marshinov is thus a symbolic one. He is with the Jews whom he had abandoned under the pull of Enlightenment. His decision to go to Palestine is a clear indication of his complete break away with the secular life that he had embraced for a long time. Singer conveys this change in Ezriel's attitude through his letter from Palestine to Zadok:

How, in any case, can this or that part of the world solve human problems? Yet Palestine is for me the symbol of the return to my roots, the source of the ancient truths that for 'thousands of years people have tried to alter, emasculate or drown in dogma'... [The Estate, p 326].

Ezriel takes pride in being a Jew, for the god-fearing Jews are the people responsible for the preservation of their culture. He expresses his reverence for them. They, according to him, are aware of the secret of happy living. He says: "These Jews are the true realists. They know that in all generations, man is born bad and that he must work from the cradle to the grace merely not to become an evildoer" [The Estate, pp 326-27]. Ezriel concludes his letter affirming his complete identification with the cultural heritage of which he is a very proud inheritor. These words of Ezriel bring him back to his roots and conclude his search for lost identity. It is, of course, with a sense of protest that he returns to the fold of his people: "The power, whatever it is, that has kept us alive for four
thousand years is still with us. I can deny God but I cannot stop being a Jew ..."
[The Estate, p 327].

As it is with Calman and Ezriel, the desire to return to one's own root is also
there in Clara, the ex-wife of Calman. It is, however, not so overtly taken up in
her case. Singer, nonetheless, suggests that the suppressed desire that lay hidden
within Clara's being comes to the surface before her death. David Seed, in "The
Fiction of Isaac Bashevis Singer" sums up Clara's character in the following
words:

The most interesting character in the novels is Clara ... She is right
outside the rather rigid moral categories which tend to cramp many
of the others. She is promiscuous, cynical and a hard-hearted business
woman, but is psychologically complex ... But she turns back to her
original faith once she realises that she is fatally ill ....

Clara is out and out a modern woman. What she yearns for is true love which
she fails to have from either Calman or Zipkin. She has, of course, some happy
moments when she feels very close to her ambition. Though she does not have
very amicable relationship with Calman, she visits him before leaving for America
to meet Zipkin. She meets him and gets from him a promise that in case she dies,
he would say Kaddish after her. Though she has embraced the modern life-style,
the desire of Kaddish is so deep-rooted in her consciousness that she cannot
ignore it. In addition to this, when she dies, Clara's body, especially her face,
assumes Jewish features. It is implied that whatever she tried to suppress all
through her life comes to the surface and discloses her identity, in spite of herself.
Singer's description of her dead body bears out this: "As hour after hour went
by, the corpse became less and less Clara. The nose grew longer and acquired a
Semitic curve as if during the life-time Clara had been able to keep it in check
...." [The Estate, p 258].
The search for the lost identity is also presented through the character of Zadok, the heretic, the son of the Rabbi of Marshinov. Zadok also left the Rabbi's home and adopted modern ways of living. Right from his childhood, he had shown his displeasure in matters of the study of the Scriptures. But his wife Hannah wants to live like a Jewish wife. In spite of Zadok's protests, she celebrates Rosh Hashana as it was done in her parent's house. Zadok shows no enthusiasm about it. He, on the contrary, argues with Ezriel about his plan to go to Palestine and tries to dissuade him from going.

After Ezriel's departure to Palestine, Zadok also experiences the presence of the anti-Semitic feelings among the gentiles towards him. When he is informed about his father's imminent death, he starts growing a beard. He cannot think of going to Marshinov clean-shaved. He should look like a Hassid again. He recalls Ezriel's arguments about modern sciences which he had compared to salt water. "The more one drank of it, the less it quenched one's thirst. Every aspect of it was filled with detail, but one could arrive at no meaningful total ..." [The Estate, p 328].

Gradually, Zadok also has moments of disillusionment. Neither Mathematics nor Darwin's theory of the Origin of the Species appeals to him. He, like a believer, feels the hand of God or a plan out of which the universe has emerged: "Even if life should be millions of years old, the species could not have developed without a plan. Every flower, every bird, every animal contradicted this theory. And where had the first cell come from?" [The Estate, p 329].

He ponders over his own acts. What had he gained? He had escaped from the Talmud, from the Zohar, from the Shulhan Aruk. He had wanted to depend only
on facts, on reason. But facts led him nowhere, and the reason was that he wasankrupt from the beginning. Truth remained veiled. Zadok, like Ezriel suffers
from doubts. Yet he develops a strong pull towards Judaism in face of the
widespread feeling of anti-semitism. He experiences this when people address
him in an abusive language and insult him.

Another matter that intrigues him was the opposing violence and eating meat.
He feels:

How one could be opposed to violence and at the same time consume
the flesh of innocent beasts and fowls. Could there be a justification for
this? It was simply a matter of power. Whoever held the knife
slaughtered. But he, after all, was against the right of might ....
[The Estate, p 330].

Thus Zadok experiences the contradiction between opposition of violence and
eating of meat. For him, anti-semitic feelings were nothing but a form of wielding
power against the powerless. Hannah is taken by surprise when Zadok announces
his decision to go back to Marshinov. On his way to the station he analyses his
feelings and finds a sense of repentance within him. He knows what change he
had undergone all these years. The change is described as follows: "He had once
been a devoted son. When his father had become ill, he had stained his Psalter
with tears. But since he had become a worldly man, he had become cruel. His
father was spitting out his lungs and his son remained in Warsaw". [The
Estate, p 331].

Zadok reaches Marshinov before his father the Rabbi, breathes his last. Though
there are no explicit comments about his return to his Jewish lifestyle, visit to
Marshinov itself is a clear indication that at last he has returned to the fold of
Judaism.
Singer, thus, through parallel movements from Marshinov to Jampol, from Jampol to Marshinov, from Warsaw to Marshinov and the vice-versa builds up a symmetrical structure that emphasises the search of the individuals for their identity and roots.

In the light of the ethics of protest, a majority of characters face chaos in their lives. The pattern of encountering chaos varies from character to character. Thus the next chapter discusses it in detail.

References


5. Ibid, p 17.


7. Murray Baumgarten, "The Historical Novel: Some Postulates", in
CLIO. Vol.IV/2, 1975, pp 177-78.


10. Quoted in Gershom, p 206.

