CHAPTER-III

PSYCHOLOGICAL CONFLICT
Psychological Conflict plays important role in the development of plot as well as the story in the novels of Erich Segal. Almost in all his novels psychological conflict is inseparable part. In *Love Story* several times, psychological conflict appears in the mind of Oliver. The Conflict makes Oliver Hamlet of Shakespeare. Due to the psychological conflict, the protagonist of *Love Story*, Oliver disturbs a lot. Oliver is in love with Jennifer and she also loves him a lot. They meet several times and also talk on the phone. Jennifer occupies important place in Oliver’s mind. They spend lot of time with each other. They discuss their hobbies, interest, likings and disliking. At the beginning of their relationship, Oliver has a doubt about Jennifer. His internal mind is occupied with the doubt of whether Jennifer has an affair with anybody. Segal significantly reveals his internal conflict:

“I ambled into the lounge area. From after I could see Jenny on the phone. She had left the booth door open. I walked slowly, casually, hoping she would catch sight of me, my bandages, my injuries, in toto, and be moved to slam down the receiver and rush to my arms. As I approached, I could hear Fragment of Conversation

‘Yeah. Of Course! Absolutely Oh, me too, Phil.

I love you too, Phil.’

I stopped ambling. Who was she talking to? It wasn’t Davidson – there was no Phil in any part of his name. I had long ago checked him out in our Class Register. *(Love Story, 79)*

At the initial level of their relationship, Oliver simply couldn’t trust Jennifer completely. His heart accepts her love but brain is not ready to accept it. He thinks that there should be somebody whom she is talking. Segal has
depicted the internal conflict which appears in his mind and brain. He couldn’t decide anything and therefore, directly asks Jenny about Phil.

‘When we were outside, about to step into my MG, I oxygenated my lungs with a breath of evening, and put the question as casually as I could.

‘Say, Jen…’

‘Yeah?’

‘Uh – who’s Phil?’

She answered matter-of-factly as she got into the car:

‘My father’

I wasn’t about to believe a story like that

“You call our father Phil?”

“That’s his name. (Love Story, 44)

There is a hidden suspect in his mind about her. Even he doesn’t believe her when she says that Phil is her own father. The condition of Jennifer is not different than Oliver. Both of them take lot of time to understand each other.

“Their love matures during the novel.”(Laura, 39) Even both of them have no information about each others’ past life and family background. In the beginning, Jennifer also faces psychological conflict. She couldn’t bear it for more time. But she is aware that the miss-understanding could harm the relationship. Whatever doubts she has in her mind should be cleared. Transparency makes any relationship more concrete and therefore, she thinks that it is better to ask Oliver directly than to develop a particular notion about him. In their first meeting, she has several questions in her mind:

“By now Jenny had read my bio in program.
I made triple sure that Vic Claman, the manager, saw that she got one.

“For Christ’s sake, Barrett, is this your first date?”

“Shut up, Vic, or you’ll be chewing your teeth.”

(*Love Story, 10-11*)

Segal has pointed out inner/psychological conflict which plays vital role in the development of characters. The inner world and the psyche of the characters is remarkably exposed by the novelist. The doubts and queries in Oliver and Jenny’s mind are right at their place. It may not possible for any person to trust other while knowing him completely. There are few doubts in Jennifer and Oliver’s mind. Internal conflict helps to make their relationship concrete and stronger. They maintain transparency in their relationship and therefore, very soon they occupy each others’ heart. The doubt is later on replaced by complete trust. Oliver and Jennifer seem the ideal and happiest couple after marriage.

Marriage of Oliver and Jennifer bring several economical problems in their life. After marriage, he leaves his ancestral house and goes to live with Jenny in a very cheap apartment in North Cambridge. Actually the house is out of repair. It is originally a two family structure, now converted into four apartments, overpriced even at its ‘cheap’ rental. Jennifer knows that which kind of life Oliver has lived. There is guilt in her mind. She thinks that, she is responsible for Oliver’s current condition and suffering. She blames herself. She is of the view that she is responsible for whatever problems have appeared in his life. Though it is her true but due to this feeling, she suffers a lot.

“Jenny’s role,” as Mark Spilka notes, “is to bring the Barretts together.”(789)
She takes several efforts to repair the relationship between Oliver and his father. Jennifer hopes that Oliver should not behave with his parents rudely. After marriage, till the end of the novel there is only one quarrel in Oliver and Jennifer’s relationship. Oliver’s rude behavior with his parents is the root cause of it. According to Jennifer, Oliver is deliberately tries to hurt his parents. She says, “I have probably lied or Cheated in my life. But I’ve never deliberately hurt anyone.”(103). It seems that she deliberately takes efforts to resolve the conflict.

‘He’s wounded, Oliver! Can you just sit there and let your father bleed?’ …

‘Oliver’, she pleaded, ‘could you just say a word?’

To him? She must be going out of her mind!

‘I mean, like just maybe “hello?”’

She was offering the phone to me. And trying not to cry.

‘I will never talk to him. Ever’, I said with perfect calm.

And now she was crying. Nothing audible, but tears pouring down her face. And then She- she begged.

‘For me, Olive I’ve never asked you for anything please.’

(‘Love Story, 136-137’)

The character of Jennifer depicted by Segal has all the moral qualities. Though Oliver’s father has denied Jennifer as a daughter in law but she seems aware about her responsibilities.

Oliver finishes his law school from Harvard. Erwin, Bella and Oliver are the top three in the Law School graduating class. The firm *Jonas and Marsh* pays to Oliver Barrett IV $11,800, the absolute highest salary received by any
member of graduating class. Oliver changes his old house and the family is now shifted to New-York. Their financial problem is solved and therefore they decide to have a child. Even before Jenny gets pregnant, Oliver decides the name of the unborn child. After several efforts Jenifer could not become pregnant and therefore they decide to consult a doctor. After several tests of Jennifer, Dr. Sheppard comes to the conclusion that Jenny could not beget children. Dr. Sheppard gives very shocking news to Oliver. He says, “Jenny is very sick and suffering from Leukemia. (Love Story, 168)”

Doctor reaches to the conclusion after several tests, but Oliver could not believe him. Jenny’s blood tests are repeated three times to confirm. He is not ready to accept the reality that Jenny is going to die. Neglecting all the reports, Oliver raises question about the diagnosis. It is the result of his extraordinary love for Jenny. Due to internal conflict, he simply doesn’t accept that Jenny is suffering from Leukemia. Remarkably the novelist delineates:

‘She’s only twenty-four! I told the doctor, shouting, I think. He nodded, very patiently, knowing full well Jenny’s age, but also understanding what agony this was for me. Finally I realized that I couldn’t just sit in this man’s office forever. So I asked him what to do. I mean, what I should do. He told me to act as normal as possible for as long as possible. I thanked him and lot. (Love Story,170)

Oliver decides to behave normally but it seems not easy for him. He is in turmoil because due to his lovable person’s life is in danger. Segal has highlighted Oliver’s helplessness. Though he disturbs but tries to behave
normally. The internal conflict in his mind is unbearable. His love and affection for Jennifer make him to suffer a lot. He is suggested by the doctor not to tell anything Jenny about her leukemia but ironically the information which Oliver is trying to hide is already revealed to Jennifer.

Oliver’s struggle with himself is very prominent. There is a very good understanding in Oliver and Jenny. Jennifer realizes that Oliver is coursing himself. He feels guilty. Before marriage Jennifer gets the scholarship to go to the Paris. Nadia Boulanger, a famous music teacher becomes ready to guide her. It is her dream to go to the Europe. It seems that for the sake of their marriage, she scarifies her wish of going out of the country. Conerly and Tripathy claims that people who give up goals to preserve relationships are highly co-operative, not very assertive, or goal oriented.(27) Internally Oliver blames himself for not allowing her to go to Europe. Oliver thinks that her wish of visiting Europe will remain incomplete. Jennifer can understand his internal feelings.

‘Listen, Oliver’, Said Jenny, and it was in her angry voice, albeit soft. ‘Oliver, you’ve got to stop being sick!’

‘Me?’

‘That guilty look on your face, Oliver, it’s sick.’

Honestly, I tried to change my expression. But any facial muscles were frozen.

‘It’s nobody’s fault, you preppie bastard.’

She was saying. ‘Would you please stop blaming yourself!’

I wanted to keep looking at her because I wanted to never take my eyes from her, but still I had to lower my eyes. I
was so ashamed that even now Jenny was reading my mind so perfectly. (*Love Story*, 201)

The love between Oliver and Jennifer has crossed all the boundaries. There is a very good understanding between them. Even they easily read each other’s mind.

In *Oliver’s Story*, the feeling of guilt and confusion state of mind of several characters is also rendered by the novelist. In the beginning of the novel, Oliver himself admits that he is a sick and psychologically disturbed. He realizes that since the death of Jennifer he could not feel anything. The internal conflict is also important as far as the novel *Oliver’s Story* is concerned. Due to the circumstances situations the major character seems in turmoil. Oliver is very angry due to the sudden death of his wife. The event affects him badly. He also neglects public programs. After the death of Jennifer, he hasn’t left the house. Oliver prefers to live with the memories of Jennifer:

‘Oh, I was very angry.

I worked as late as possible. I didn’t like to leave the office. Everything in our apartment somehow emanated Jenny. The piano. And her books. The furniture we picked together. Yeah, I sort of told myself that I should move. But I got home so late it didn’t seem to matter. Gradually I got accustomed to my solo dinners in our quiet kitchen, playing tapes at night – although I never sat in Jenny’s reading chair. I had even almost taught myself to get to sleep in our so-empty bed. And so I didn’t think I had to leave the place.
Philip realizes that Oliver feel lonely only because of Jennifer’s past memories. He knows that Oliver is in turmoil whether to forget Jennifer or not. After the death of Jennifer, Oliver doesn’t leave the house due his attachment and past memories. Philip thinks that Oliver will not forget Jenny until he left the house. There had been a discussion between Oliver and Philip. Even he intimates him that he will not visit Oliver until he left the house. Due to the death of Jennifer, Oliver buries himself in a work. He stays in the office till late night. After coming at home even he couldn’t sleep. He seems stick to her memories. Sometime Oliver thinks that his pain and suffering may decrease if he left the house. But he is attached with the house emotionally and therefore it is not easy for him to move at another place. Phil has the opinion that Oliver should get married and he is sure that before leaving the house it is not possible. Deliberately Philip tries to motivate Oliver to move. But due to turmoil, Oliver doesn’t move at another place. His internal mind is in confusing state whether to leave Jenny and her sweet memories or not. After the death of Jenny, Oliver couldn’t separate himself from Jenny. Though Jennifer is died but he wants to stick to her memories. It is true that loveliness has made Oliver’s life worst.

Deliberately Oliver avoids his social life. After death of Jennifer, Oliver has completely stopped to attend the social functions. It seems that Oliver is in search of a good reason for not to attend the party:
Sunday came. And Naturally, I didn’t want to go. But fate did not come through for me. I didn’t get an urgent message on an urgent case. I didn’t get a call from Phil. I didn’t even get the flu. Thus, lacking an excuse—and carrying a large bouquet—I found myself on Riverside and Ninety-fourth. Outside the door of Louis stein. *(Oliver’s Story, 37)*

Oliver’s mind seems in search of a good reason to avoid the function. It is the grief of Jennifer due to which he accepts a lonely life. There is a struggle between his mind and brain. He hesitates to attend public programme. He is aware that his active social life would make him to forget Jenny and may be therefore he avoids going in public programme.

After meeting with Marcie, Oliver unfolds all his life in front of her. Oliver is a very simple man. He doesn’t like cunningness and treachery. His life is like an open book, a plain mirror in which nothing is hidden. But in the early stage of the relationship between Marcie and Oliver, there is nothing transparent. Marcie’s life is a kind of mystery for Oliver which he couldn’t solve easily. Her character is difficult to understand. Marcie is attracted towards Oliver, but she could not open all her secereties in front of Oliver. She deliberately hides the information about her wealth. She is the only heir of Bennendale group of industries. So she has a fear in the mind that any person would come close to her for her property and therefore deliberately she hides her family background. Though she keeps some secretes from Oliver but she offers him the place of her husband, While Oliver could not give her the place
of Jenny. She constructs a new apartment for them symbolizing the new beginning of relationship of both. Oliver explains the place as following way:

Unequivocally, the place was great. I mean it looked exactly like those perfect layouts on the upper floors of Binnendale’s. I’d watched young couples gazing at those model rooms, and dreaming, “Gee, if we could live like this.”

Marcie took me through the living room, the gadget-laden kitchen (“I’ll take cooking lessons, Oliver”), her father office, then the king–size bedroom and, at last, the big surprise: my office. Yes. We had separate rooms for His and Her professions. Mine was furnished in a herd of leather. Shelves of glass and chrome to hold my legal books. Sophisticated lighting. *(Oliver’s Story, 247)*

The novelist highlights the royal, luxurious life of Marcie. She is ready to accept Oliver as a husband. The new apartment is being constructed considering that in future they may marry. In the new apartment there is a separate room for Oliver. The room is well furnished and posh. Such apartment is a dream of most of the couples. Segal has underlined the fact that there is a little difference between the character of Jenny and Marcie. Jenny had nothing to give Oliver than her love and time but on the contrary Marcie has everything instead of time. She has everything which Jenny has not. Blonde, athletic, wealthy and well connected, Marcie is every bit as competitive as Oliver.

But Oliver has nothing to do with her wealth and her factories. Even he has nothing to do with his own ancestral wealth. His first wife, Jennifer is from
a working class family and he was very happy with her. According to him, luxurious life is not necessary to live happy life. There should be love in the relationship. Transparency, truth and love are the secrets of happy married life. Segal has pointed out that love, truth, transparency and faith are not the parts of Oliver and Marcie’s relationship. All these things are absent in their love.

Through the novel Oliver’s Story, Segal highlights that Oliver never compares Marcie with Jennifer, because as per his intension Jenny is incomparable. He never allows the place of Jenny to anybody else. Oliver doesn’t deny that Marcie has no place in his life but he openly accepts that Marcie has occupied a little place in his heart. On one hand he couldn’t forget Jenny and the other hand he has a space in the heart for Marcie.

After the celebration of Christmas, Marcie intends to visit Hong-Kong for her business. Oliver also decides to go with her. It is pre-decided that Oliver may visit the famous places of Hong-Kong till Marcie finishes her work. After that both of them may visit some places. But Marcie has no idea that it would be her last trip with Oliver. While visiting Hong-Kong with John (supervisor in a factory), Oliver comes to know that Marcie has some textile factories in the city and therefore, instead of seeing sights he prefers to view the factories. These factories become the major cause of the conflict between Oliver and Marcie. The factories of Marcie turned to be sweetshops. The supervisor tells Oliver that there is a huge difference in Hong-Kong and California. In factories, Oliver understands that the workers get very little wages. Even it is difficult for
those people to purchase two times of meal. Erich Segal has raised the problem of child labour with the help of Oliver’s Story.

According to the Law of Hong-Kong, a child should be above the age of fifteen to work in a factory. But Oliver realizes that several children are below the age of fifteen. The supervisor provides them fake identity cards. Even some children have Id’s of their elder brothers and sisters. The workers are forced to live worst life. Once Marcie had told Oliver that due to the union, workers earn much better. But Oliver found it wrong. Oliver goes back to the hotel after visiting factories hoping that all these things would be unknown to Marcie. Segal has pointed out Oliver’s mental agony regarding the low wages and child labour. He thinks that she may be unknown about workers exploitation. But later on, he realizes that she is a liar and a professional woman. As he admits:

“I saw enough this afternoon. With John.”

“Oh, “she said.

Then gradually she noticed I had not returned her smile of welcome. I was looking up at her, wondering was this the woman I had almost...loved?

“Something wrong?” she asked.

“Everything,” I answered

“For instance?”

I said it quietly.

“You’ve got little children working in your sweetshops.”

Marcie hesitated for a moment.

“Everybody does it”

“Marcie, that is no excuse.” (Oliver’s Story, 302)
Oliver realizes that Marcie is already behind all the issues of labour. It is she who victimizes common people. Instead of changing her views regarding child labour and exploitation of workers, she tries to change Oliver’s mind saying everybody does it. But according to Oliver everybody does it doesn’t mean that we also should do the same thing. Marcie is aware that Oliver badly hates to the sweetshops and exploitation of worker. May be due to that she has hidden the information from him. The novel Oliver’s Story focuses on the sweetshops of Hong-Kong.

So it may possible that workers in all her factories are the victim of her exploitation. Oliver expects that the relationship must be on the base of honesty and transparency and there is no any transparency in their relation. According to Marcie, Oliver should not interfere in her business life. Business and personal life are two different things for her.

Oliver’s view seems completely different from Marcie Nash. He knows that he can’t change whatever happening in the sweetshops. But he doesn’t want to be a part of it. He doesn’t want to involve into her sweetshops and exploitation of poor and needy workers. He doesn’t want to suck the blood of small children for his own economic prosperity. Oliver leaves ancestral house due to sweetshops therefore his decision of leaving Marcie is not shocking for the readers. Before visiting sweetshops, Oliver seems confuse whether to marry Marcie or not. But the exploitation of workers and children and her lie regarding sweetshops dispel his turmoil.
Oliver separates from Marcie because of two major reasons. He finds that there is a contradiction between their ideologies. He comes to know that Marcie is a professional industrialist and has nothing to do with betterment of her factory workers. She lacks humanistic approach. Second reason is his attachment with Jennifer. Though Jenny is died but Oliver is unable to forget her. The novelist has taken efforts to show Oliver as a devotional and true over and always ready to sacrifice for the sake of love relationship. Due to his attachment with Jenny he remains detached with Marcie.

According to Sills, conflict leads to change. This can be easily observed at the end of Oliver’s Story. Oliver’s father might have not stopped his psyche regarding exploitation of workers if Oliver may not have raised the voice against it. Due to Oliver’s conflict with his father, his father completely changes. Later on he works for the betterment of factory workers’. He has become distinct from other Barrett thinking that it is not in his hand to change the past history but it is true that he has completely changed the present. After knowing about his father Oliver decides to join the family business. Oliver returns to Boston (his birth place) to see his family with different eyes. He joins his ancestral textile business. But sometimes he asks himself, “What would be if Jenny were alive?” And then used to answer, “I would also be alive.” (Oliver’s Story, 320)

The major characters of ‘Man, Woman and Child’ find in psychological turmoil throughout the novel. Bob, Sheila, Paula, Jessica, Jean Claude, Simone Nicole are the major characters in the novel. In the beginning of the novel, Bob
looks somewhat confusing. He talks with Louis on phone. Louis is a friend of Nicole who knows about Bob and her affair. He seems the only person who is very close to Nicole and therefore gives Bob the news of Nicole’s death. He also informs Bob about the child. It is Louise who tells Bob and readers that she is independent mother. She has a boy and she has been raising the child herself. Even Bob has no idea that Jean-Claude is his son. Bob has slept with Nicole for three days and four nights. Later on they neither called each other nor did they meet. They forget each other and later on get busy in their own work. Nicole and Sheila are in his life. It is only known to Nicole and Louis that Bob is true (biological) father of Jean-Claude. The child is of nine years old. And has no idea about his father.

Through the discussion between Nicole and Bob, readers acquaint with the psyche of Nicole about marriage. Nicole doesn’t intend to marry anybody but she decides to become a mother. Bob is aware about Nicole’s nature. The discussion between Louis and Bob focuses on psychological conflict of Bob.

“Louis, this is terrible news. But I don’t see why you wanted me to call you. I mean, it’s been ten years since I last saw her.”

Suddenly a silence on the line. Then Louis answered almost in whisper: “Because of the child.”

“Child? Was Nicole married?”

‘No, no. Of course not. She was an independent mother,’ so to speak, she raised the boy herself.”

“But I still don’t see what this has to do with me,” said Bob.

“Oh- Bobbie, I do not know how to say this…”
“Say it!”

“He is your child too.” (Man, Woman and Child, 04-05)

At first he simply couldn’t believe that Jean-Claude is his son but he reminds Nicole’s intension to become independent mother which makes everything clear. After the death of mother, Jean-Claude becomes orphan. Due to loneliness he suffers a lot. Louis says, “This sufferings and grief melted me and I decided to tell everything (Man, Woman and Child, 05)”. Louise tells Bob, “Though the child is yours but Nicole never intended to let you know and disturb your family? (Man, Woman and Child, 05)”. He also informs Bob that the death of Nicole causes due to cardiac emergency. It seems difficult for Bob to believe Louise because he has never thought that such kind of event could happen with him. The information given by Louis completely disturbs him and his family atmosphere. At the beginning, he seems in psychological turmoil whether to believe him or not. But later on he realizes that whatever Louis has informed is completely true.

The event disturbs him a lot but he also gets a little satisfaction that he has a boy. His wife, Sheila could not become mother after the birth of Paula and Jessica. But it looks quite difficult to accept it openly. On the one hand he is happy due to having a son but on the other hand there are several problems before him to accept Jean-Claude openly. Remarkably Segal has focused on Bob’s disturb state of mind. He cannot accept that he is the father of Jean-Claude because he is afraid that his unfaithfulness may create several problems in his personal and professional life. The caring about unseen boy also focuses on Bob’s hidden wish of having son. He has a doubt that if Sheila comes to
know about Jean-Claude the happy family would turn into conflicting one. Sheila is not only his wife but his best friend too. But yet being a wife, she could not bear that Bob is unfaithful with her. Bob confuses to reveal the fact of Jean-Claude to Sheila but he has no option. He is completely aware that anyhow he will have to reveal secrete of Jean Claude’s birth. He worries a lot about the child and tries to bring the child to America as early as possible. But it is not possible without Sheila’s permission. Bob goes to tell Sheila about the child. Very remarkably Segal focuses on Bob’s love for wife and worry about the son. He is caught in such a condition that his mind gets attract towards the little boy but his brain worries about his family and daughters. He reveals the truth of his affair because there is a guilt in his mind, the guilt of being unfaithful to his wife.

By observing his face Sheila easily realizes that something is wrong with Bob. The truth revealed by Bob violets the assumption of Sheila that their marriage is based on a complete honesty. He tells Sheila about his affair but hesitates to tell her about child:

I haven’t seen her for ten years. I mean – “And then he blurted out, “she’s dead.”

To Sheila’s shock and hurt was added consternation.

“For God’s sake, Bob, why are you telling me all this?”

Am I supposed to write someone a letter of condolence? Have you lost your mind?”

I only wish, thought Bob.

“Sheila, I am telling you because she had a child.”
“And we have two- so goddamn what?”

Bob hesitated. And then whispered, barely audibly,

“He’s mine. The boy is mine.”

“Oh, no, it can’t be true.” Her eyes were pleading for denial.

Bob nodded sadly: Yes it’s true. (Man, Woman and Child, 16)

It is difficult for Sheila to hear all about Bob’s affair. Bob’s unfaithfulness shatters her belief into pieces and simply she is unable to understand that why Bob needed to involve with another woman. The character of Sara in The Class completely differs from the character of Sheila. Sheila tries to save the family thinking about the future her daughters but Sara says, “Ted he is not so little anymore. And he can sense what’s happening to us. So don’t give me that old junk about staying together for the children’s sake (The Class: 385)”. In The Class when Sara realizes about her husband’s affair with one of his students. She simply gets divorce. But In Man, Woman and Child, Sheila tries to save her marriage and her family. She hurts due to husband’s unfaithfulness but her family seems more important for her than her grief and sufferings.

The female characters depicted by Segal have different psyche, ideologies and way of thinking. Remarkably through his novels the novelist deals with all sorts of characters. He presents traditional and modern characters. Some of his characters blindly believe on religious faith and some characters even do not believe on any religion and God.
There are several reasons due to which Sheila doesn’t think to separate from Bob. She is worried about her daughters’ future. Bob and Sheila have two daughters: Jessica and Paula, of 12 and 9 respectively. She herself is a famous editor. She assumes that she has no right to punish her daughters for her husband’s mistake. If she might have taken a divorce, she easily could grow and educate her daughters. But she dares to struggle with the situation. She could not forget so many happy years which they have spent with each other. It is her genuine love for Bob that could not let her think about the separation.

There is a very good understanding between husband and wife. As far as psychological level, Segal’s most of the novels depict healthy relationship of husband and wife. The daughters are happy due to arrival of Jean-Claude but there is a hidden tension in the family. According to Jessica’s assumption Jean-Claude is coming from France therefore he will not be able to talk in English. But when he arrives both of them learn that his English is fluent and good. He explains that he has got private tuitions since he was very little. Very soon all the children become good friends. But the conflict appears in their friendship when Jessica and Paula realize that the French kid living in their house is their father’s biological child. Bob reveals the secret to his friend Burney. It is Burney’s Son, Davey who hears it while his parents discussing. Davey circulate the information to Paul and Jessica. The girls do not believe that there father can be unfaithful to their mother. Jessica curses Davey:

“I heard my parents talking last night, see?”

“Yeah?”
“They were whispering kind of loud. About your parents...”

Jessica grew slightly anxious. She had lately noticed a slight coolness between Bob and Sheila, but had refused to ascribe any importance to it. Not them, she had told herself. They’re happy.

“What about my parents?” She asked, unconsciously biting her nail.

“Well, it was about the French kid, actually,”

“What?”

“He is your father’s.”

“What are you talking about?” demanded Jessica, frightened that she might have understood. (Man, Woman and Child, 132-133)

Davey is frightened to tell Jessica about what he has heard from his parent. Though Davey is of Jessica’s age but he is afraid to disclose such matters. The fear of Jessica is also highlighted by the novelist. She seems in psychological conflict whether to accept the truth regarding her father or not. She observes the change in behavior of her parents but she doesn’t take it seriously. She has a doubt that something is wrong in Bob and Sheila but deliberately neglects it thinking that they are happy. She is very small but mature enough to know such things. Due to Davey’s confirmation her fear becomes true and therefore she starts crying. While crying she curses Davey. She says that whatever Davey has told her is not true, knowing that it is true. Somewhere there is a fear in Jessica and Paula’s mind that their father will leave them. Jessica and Paula might have thought that Bob will leave them and will go to the France with Jean-Claude.
Bob’s mind is not going to accept that the boy has no idea about his father.

Jean Claude does not know who his father is! Even his own mother doesn’t tell him the name of Bob. But the child has some assumptions regarding his father. The novelist has focused on the psyche and reasoning of a child. The novelist significantly focuses on the logical reasoning of 9 years old child:

“What did your mother tell you about your father?”

He (Bob) braced himself to hear the answer.

“That he was married to someone else.” The boy lowered his head.

“And?” Bob’s heart was hammering.

“That she loved him. And they loved each other and decided to have me. But of course he could not stay in France.”

“Oh-did she ever tell you who he was?”

“No. But I have my own idea.”

“What?”

I think perhaps he was an Englishman.”

Why do you say that?”

“Because if he was Italian, I think she would have made me to learn Italian. So I could someday talk to him. (Man, Woman and Child, 74- 75)

According to Jean-Claude he has taken Private tuitions to learn English language. It seems that his intellect and reasoning is very good compared with his age. He is a mature boy. Segal has focused his maturity, intellect and hardwork. In a very little age he reads most of the famous books. He notices all the events and things very minutely. His conclusion about his father is the result
of his minute observation. It is the maturity of the little child which makes whole family to change their mind about him. When he realizes that the family atmosphere has disturbed due to his arrival, he directly asks Bob when he will have to leave. The child is devoted to his mothers dream. Sheila and her daughters accept him as a family member and request him to stay with them. But he denies their offer saying, “I have to fulfill my mother’s dream.” *(Man, Woman and Child, 198)*

The psychological conflict of Bob is highlighted by Segal when he takes Jean-Claude to the hospital. After a month, Jean-Claude decides to go back to France. But suddenly he becomes unconscious. After admitting him to the hospital, doctors come to the conclusion that the reason of his unconsciousness is burst of Appendix.

Dr. Shelton informs Bob that he need to admit the boy for operation. A little delay would be risky for the life of the child. The hospital authority asks the information about Jean-Claude’s religion. Here Bob’s answer is confusing. He says, “None”. It is very clear that Bob is of Catholic faith but he could not say anything about the child’s religion. When Dr. Shelton comes to the hospital he seeks permission to operate the boy. After it Bob doesn’t dare to accept the boy publically as his own son:

“Where are the boy’s parents?” he asked.

“They’re ….dead”, Bob answered.

“Well, someone has to sign in *loco parentis*.” Are you his guardian?”

“No. It’s a man named Venarguès in France.”
“Well, then he’ll have to give us permission by telephone. That’s legal if there’s a second person listening.”

No, thought Bob, there isn’t time. I haven’t even got Louis’s number with me. It’s somewhere in my desk.

“Uh-can’t I sign?” Bob asked.

“You have no legal authority,” said Shelton. *(Man, Woman and Child, 171)*

Bob could not admit in front of the doctor and hospital authority that he is the father of the little child. He says that the parents of the child are dead. The boy is from France. Hospital authority seeks the permission of his guardians. At first he doesn’t dare to tell truth to Dr. Shelton. But when realizes that Jean-Claude’s condition has become critical he unfolds the reality. He takes Dr. Shelton to another room and there he admits that he is the real father of a child. He signs on the form and gives the permission to operate Jean-Claude. Dr. Shelton remarks “Before few minutes you told me that you are neither his father nor his guardian” *(Man, Woman and Child, 172)*. Bob admits, “Dr. Nicole Guerin was on the medical faculty at Montpellier, France. I had an affair with the lady doctor and the child is out of wedlock”. *(Man, Woman and Child, 172)* Jean-Claude’s mother had been a medical colleague of Dr. Shelton. Segal has used symbolism in the scene. He accepts publicly that Jean-Claude is his son; it means he offers social identity to Jean-Claude. The identity of the boy which was hidden for long time from the people is being offered. The novelist asserts all the doubts in Bob’s mind may be resolve.

Internal doubt and guilt play a very vital role in the development of story and characters in the novel, *The Class*. The characters seem in confusion while
taking the decisions of their personal life. Ted Lambros is grown up with the
goal to become Harvard tenure. His character resemble with Segal. The novelist
himself admits that “there is a lot of me in Ted,” (Smith, 45) Ted admits in the
Harvard University with no financial aid. “This meant he was condemned to
remain his Cell on Prescott Street, unable to taste the joys of Harvard life
beyond the classrooms.” (The Class, 19) He falls in love with his classmate,
Sara Harrison. She is from very rich family. Ted is born in working class family
but has high ambition in his life. The life of Ted is completely surrendered to
complete his goal. Sara is the daughter of Philip Harrison. Her father is also
Harvard graduate. Ted proposes Sara but he is in turmoil. He thinks about the
difference in Sara and his family, a kind of fear appears in his mind that she
would accept the relationship or not. Segal focuses his turmoil when he
proposes Sara:

“Do you know, Sara,” he confessed, “I’ve been dying to
ask you out since the very first minute I saw you.”

She looked at him with sudden brightness into her eyes.

“Well, what the hell took you so long–am I that
intimidating?” she asked.

“Not anymore.” (The Class, 90)

Sara has the same feelings for Ted. She is also in love with Ted
Lambros. It is also notable that earlier to their marriage they remain in love but
they never discuss about the marriage.

In his teaching career, Ted struggles sometime to secure the
position and sometime to prove his quality. Ted is a serious person but when he
works at Canterbury College as a professor he gets some bad experiences. Segal has focused on academic adjustment of Ted. Segal himself has worked as a professor and therefore he is aware about the reality in teaching field. Ted does academic adjustment due to the pressure of his senior. In his class there is a student, Christopher Jastrow who is a very good football player and without him the college team couldn’t have won the Ivy title. The attitude of Jastrow is very arrogant. He doesn’t complete his assignment and speaks very rudely with Ted Lambros. Even he doesn’t attend the intermediate exam therefore Ted decides to fail him in intermediate exam. Tim seems an ideal teacher. The Dean of Canterbury College calls him and tries to change Ted’s mind. Finally Dean realizes that he is not going to listen anything and therefore intimates him the following manner. He says:

“if we should deny you tenure at the end of this year, you might not find another teaching job anywhere…. Because no matter how much you’ve published, the dean of wherever you apply is going to check with us for a character reference” (The Class, 352- 353).

The statement of the Dean makes Ted so scared, and confused. He could not reach on the judgment that whether to show Jastrow absent or fill the grade in mark list of intermediate exam before his name because if he failed Jastrow, he would have to leave the job. To become a professor, Ted has done a very hard work. Even he didn’t sleep several nights to acquire the teaching position. He has certain ideology of his own. His mind is not ready to make some
adjustment but “His whole future was at the stake and for self preservation he took his pen and in the space by Jastrow’s name hastily scribbled ‘C’ (The Class, 355).” The event teaches him a lesson that “life is full of compromises (The Class, 357).” For him bucking the system would be like King Lear of Shakespeare raging against the winds. His discussion with Sara points out that he does not want to take the risk:

“You think I was a coward, don’t you?” he murmured.
“No, Ted,” she answered. “I was just as scared as you. I shouldn’t have tried to make you into some Sophoclean hero. I mean, life is full of compromises, and what you did is pretty minuscule in the scheme of things.”

“Sara,” he whispered, “I sat there all evening wondering what the hell to do about it.” (The Class, 357)

The feeling of spoiling career motivates him to do academic adjustment. Hundreds of nights he has spend studying those bulky books and worked as a waiter to pay the tuition fees of Harvard. His one decision may place him into the difficulty. All his dreams and goals may be buried. His career which is bright would have destroyed. All these things make him to do the compromise. He might have not done the compromise if he would be alone. The care of his loving wife and innocent child make him to reconsider his decision. He never thinks that his family should pay the price of his mistake. They should suffer due to his one decision.

Sara and Ted do not speak at diner not because they had nothing to speak but because he was in deep thinking. After dinner, he tells Sara, “I
thought I’d walk to Canterbury Hall. It’s such a nice place when nobody’s around. I want to grade those exams tonight. (The Class, 354)” In such tension, he goes in a peaceful place. May be he doesn’t want to show Sara that he is in tension. He goes to Canterbury Hall to fill grades of Exam. Why did he prefer night? He could have filled the grades in the morning. Segal has used night as a symbol. The work which he has to perform isn’t moral, clean. Erich Segal remarkably delineates Ted’s mental condition:

It took him less than two minutes to enter the grades. Now only the space following Christopher Jastrow ‘69 remained- like the new show outside- fresh, clean, and unsullied. Blank. What should it be- F, Incomplete, or ABX (meaning absent from the exam)? Any of these would put the quietus on the little bastard’s football career. He sat there, staring at the paper, writing nothing. He took his pen and in the space by Jastrow’s name hastily scribbled “C” (The Class, 354- 355)

Erich Segal has also pointed out the real life of a professor. In every teacher’s life such moment comes when he works against his own will and principles, due to the pressure of some seniors. Jastrow remains absent for the intermediate and he doesn’t complete his assignments too. But Ted is helpless. It is his compromise to save his temporary job and such compromises are the part of today’s teaching career. Segal has wonderfully focused on Tim’s internal conflict between true and false.

The disturbed psyche of Ted also disturbs Sara. Genuinely, she wants to help him but couldn’t understand how? Her future is also connected with him.
In such critical condition she has two options, first to tell Ted to do whatever Dean says and second is to stake his career by disobeying. But she is aware about Ted’s nature. Sara does whatever a caring wife may do but Sara’s act hurts Ted’s masculine ego. He says, “You shouldn’t have done without asking me. I’m the man in the family”. (356) He takes this step because she doesn’t want to go down in flames just to preserve his masculine ego.

The arrival of Felicity Hendon in Ted Lambros life spoils his family. Felicity is his undergraduate student. He is fascinated due to her beauty. Their affair is the cause root of Ted and Sara’s conflict. “The girl was nearly half of Ted’s age” (The Class, 382) Ted couldn’t reject a polite request of Felicity and therefore, he spends weakened with her. He speaks lie with Sara that he is going to his friend to the weekend. He has a fear that his wife would realize the truth. The fear of being caught becomes true. The bond of Ted and Sara’s relationship is so strong but the charming beauty of Felicity and greed of physical pleasure shatters it. The greed for the beauty and sex destroy his marriage. His own friend Wylie blames him saying, “I’ll grant adultery’s as popular at Oxford as any place on earth. But most of those who practice it don’t play with undergraduates.” (The Class, 382-383)

In Danny and Maria’s relationship psychological conflict arises due to difference in their individual ideology. There is also difference between their ethnical backgrounds which creates clashes among them. He is a gifted pianist and a popular personality. To share his happiness with friends and supporters he arranges a royal party. Some respected people come to attend the party. Maria
is there. But she realizes that Danny has started to neglect her. When Maria decides to leave, Danny stops her gently saying:

“Well Maria,” he whispered, “let’s not separate tonight. I want to be with you. I mean, I want to share this special night with someone I really love.”

“I’m tired, Danny, honestly I am,” she answered softly.

“Maria listen,” Danny pleaded, “comes upstairs with me. Let’s share that room-and be a couple. (The Class, 171)

In party, Danny is special for everyone but for him Maria is an important. Second time, Danny urges for the physical relations. Maria is a different kind of a girl and there is a lot of difference in their ideologies and perspective. “Maria had already cleared from her side that she wants to give her husband her virginity and to establish sexual relationship before marriage is a mortal sin for her. (The Class, 155)” In other words she makes it clear that she is ready to marry but not ready to establish sexual relations with him before marriage. The urge of physical relationship is prominent in his character. Due to the frequent demand of sexual relationship, Maria seems in mental turmoil and begins to think whether Danny really loves her or just he wants her body.

The religious and spiritualistic psyche of Maria stops her to develop physical relationship with Danny. The act of Danny separates them for nearly about three years. Within these three years his name and fame enormously increases. “He own second Grammy for best solo Jazz album. Even he wrote another page of musical history winning Grammies in both Classical and Jazz categories in a single day. Because of his packed concert schedule, he changes
bedrooms as often as pajamas. \textit{The Class, 217})" Stating about Danny’s affairs \textbf{Qorina} says, “Danny may not be mature enough to face popularity, he always did affairs and sexual relations with other woman.” (16) Segal also focuses on the conflict in Danny’s sexual psychology. He sleeps with several girls but feel emptiness in his life. Every day he sleeps with a new girl. The girls are crazy to have his sexual signature due to his talent, as well as his personality. He realizes that if there would have no name and fame, nobody would have loved him. This is the moment when he really thinks that there should be somebody in his life with whom he can share his life. And obviously he reminds Maria. That time he understands the real value of her love. But he is again confused whether she would accept him or not? Whether she would be married? Since last three years, he hasn’t contacted with her. To know the answers of the several questions which he has in his mind, he decides to call her. His heart beats very high when he dials her landline number. It indicates that Danny still loves her. Due to emptiness, he suffers a lot. He is completely confused whether to call or not. Her mother informs him that she doesn’t live at home. By taking efforts, he gets her address.

\textbf{Erich Segal} has pointed out the genuine love of Maria. Though three years have been passed but still she waits for Danny. There is nobody in his life. Meanwhile there are several girls in Danny’s life but he wants a single girl who may love him and not to his talent, name and fame. He is afraid of thinking about life without Maria. Danny proposes her for marriage and without any hesitation she accepts his proposal.
Danny Rossi becomes so famous in a short period and his schedule is full pack. Every day he is busy in programs, in shows and in TV programs. But this overwork lays adverse effect on his health. He begins to grow tired, not of music and certainly not of the applause that seems to surround him quadrphonically both on and off stage. Nor is he weary of the unending parade of women who present themselves for his sexual signature. His tiredness disturbs him completely. Sometime he thinks that this may can be the effect of increasing age and over work. But he is not satisfied with his own answer. Finally he decides to consult a noted internist in Beverly Hills. The conclusion of Dr. Whitney focuses on his past life. Whitney asserts:

After a full workup, during which every inch of him was probed and every bodily fluid analyzed, he sat down across the glass–and–chrome desk in Dr. Standish Whitney’s office. “Give it to me, Stan.” Danny smiled uneasily. “Am I going to die”? 

“Yes.” The doctor replied poker-faced. Then immediately added, “But not for at least another thirty or forty years.”

“Then why am I always so goddamn tired?” Danny asked.

“For one thing, Danny, any guy with a love life as active as yours would be worn out. Although let me quickly say that no one ever died from too much sex.” (The Class, 448)

All of his tiredness and frustration seems the result of his active sex life. Dr. Whitney gives him some drugs which helps him to do the continuous work without feeling tired. But later on the drugs spoil his whole career. After taking
drugs he feels like a teenager. He isn’t aware that the continuous use of the drugs may destroy his musical career. Nearly about three years he regularly takes the dose of the given medicine and works continuously for several hours. He thinks that the medicine of Dr. Whitney helps him a lot for continuous work.

One day Danny goes for the shoot of a TV program with his wife Maria. He finishes three episodes on the same day. Maria and other staff admire him for the continuous work. All are amazed thinking that where does he gets the strength? Since morning he has been busy, playing piano. At 10.45 pm all of them take five minutes short break. Danny returns to his dressing room and immediately reaches in his makeup kit for one of Dr. Whitney’s megavitamins. He realizes that his thumb and forefinger of his left hand are trembling involuntarily. Even with a conscious effort, he couldn’t stop the shaking—except by covering it with his right hand. He tries to reassure himself that this is merely tiredness. He has, after all, been working for nearly ten hours. But he is doubtful about his own explanation. Due to his illness he makes some changes in the schedule of shooting. It seems very clearly that throughout the shooting he has been trying to hide his left hand. Internal conflict of Danny regarding health and profession is remarkably depicted by Erich Segal.

Second time he really needs to consult a doctor. Though he has a strong wish to complete the serial same day but due to his left hand it becomes quite difficult for him. He doesn’t feel tired but couldn’t play piano as usual with left hand. He doesn’t tell Maria about the problem he is facing. He assumes that
nobody observed him while hiding his hand but Maria has observe his every activity. She has a close watch on his each and every moment.

The condition of Danny makes him to consult a neurologist. He goes to Dr. Brice Weisman’s office. Weisman is a world renowned neurologist and is also one the fans of Danny Rosie. Danny comes to know that he has seen his several T.V. shows. Weisman informs him that the peripheral tumor is detected in his left hand. Dr. Weisman makes it clear that he would not be able to play piano anymore and if he tried so, the infection might spread to other hand as well. Doctor asserts:

“Mr. Rossi, much of the working of the brain is still a mystery to us. At this stage of our knowledge, the best we can offer are medications that mask the symptoms. But I assure you, we can hide a tremor as small as yours for many years.” (The Class, 490)

The suggestion of doctor is relaxing for Danny. Danny speaks about the drugs given by the former doctor. Danny’s single question reveals the cause of his current condition. Danny asks, “Will these drugs let me play the piano?” (The Class, 490) Watching the drugs Dr. Weismann immediately realizes that Danny has taken a treatment at Dr. Whitney, because several patients like Danny has come to Dr. Weisman regarding the same problem. Segal focuses on Danny’s deep frustration with following dialogues:

Danny suddenly leapt to his fat and began to pace the room. Then he shouted from the depths of his grief,
addressing the neurologist almost as if his diagnosis had been an act of hostility. “You don’t understand, Doctor. I’m a great pianist. I’m a truly great pianist…… (The Class, 491)

Due to the shocking news of neurologist, Danny loses his control for a short time. Though he is well aware about all the manners but due to a sudden shock he could not control his feelings. Piano playing is the only thing which he could really do well. The grief of unable to play Piano anymore hurts him to the large extent. In such disturbed mental condition Danny leaves Dr. Weisman’s office.

Throughout the novel, it can be seen that Danny has no friend to whom he could share his grief. Even his relationship with his wife, Maria is not too good due to the series of his extramarital affair. They are husband and wife, but their sex life is over and their bedrooms have been already separated. He goes home and doesn’t speak to anybody. There is a fear in his mind that due to his physical disorder, Maria would leave him. The silence of Danny focuses his internal conflict. Instead of talking Maria, he prefers to sit in the darkness in his third-floor studio. At 2.00A.M. Maria comes to him to know what is wrong with him. The secret of his physical disorder is revealed to Maria. In such condition Maria supports him:

“I didn’t marry you because you could outplay Liszt. I didn’t marry you because you were a star. I married you because I loved you and I believed you when you once said that you needed me. Danny, Darling, we can get
through this together.” Maria kept holding him as he leaned on her shoulder, sobbing softly.

And, unlike all those audiences that clap and then go home, she would always be here. *(The Class, 495)*

The fear of Danny that Maria may leave him disappears due to her mental and emotional support at the time of critical situation. The disability brings him close to his wife.

While delineating psychological conflict of adults encompassing the socio-cultural, family and economical responsibilities, the novelist also rendered the mental upheavals of children arises due to the parents’ wish and socio-economical set up. In Segal’s *The Class* over burden of parents’ expectation is also responsible for psychological conflict of some minor characters. For Sussan Issac, *The Class* is protagonists’ story of how they were shaped by their years at college and what happened to them after they left.”*(09)*

The novel deals with the atmosphere of Harvard University where students study for the best grades. Jason wakes up at the sound of someone in great distress. It is just after 2.00 AM from across the suite, he hears muffled sobbing and frightened cries. Immediately he wakes up and rushes to David’s door. To know what is wrong with him. He knocks the door and asks David whether everything is all right. Though nothing is all right but he tells him what he just saw….dream. Next day, Jason realizes the news that David tried to commit suicide. It is David’s frustration which leads him to attend for suicide.

Segal focuses on the frustration of students which comes due to over expectations of parent. David’s parent dominates him for the settlement of their
dream about him. Unfortunately, he is unable to fulfill their expectations. He becomes frustrated. His attempt of making suicide suggests his unbearable condition. Segal has advised to consider the interest and ability of the children.

In *Doctors* Segal deals with the internal conflict of Seth Lazarus. He is a doctor and has completed his M.D. from the Harvard University. Seth seems affected by the past memories of his life. Seth has an elder brother, Hovie. He is in the private nursing home. His brother is of twenty five years old but he needs somebody to change his diaper. There was an accident when he was of four years old. Due to the accident he has become physically disable. According to doctors he is unable to feel anything. Hovie is much stronger than Seth. But since twenty years, he is in the same room. While describing the heartbreaking condition of Hovie, Segal puts:

Lying on the bed in the cubicle that passed as a room was a man-or a very large boy, it was hard for Judy to tell which clothed in what looked like a baby’s diaper. To say he was thin would be understatement. He was emaciated, every rib visible through his pale translucent skin. He gave the impression of living death. He lay back, his head lolling from 70 side to side, his eyes unfocused, spittle dripping down his chin. (*Doctors*, 257)

If Seth’s parent might have kept Hovie in government hospital then he must have died. Hovie’s condition is uncoverable. Doctors have already told to the family regarding the lack of chances in improvement in his condition. Still his mother has a hope that he may recover. Hovie is senseless but Seth is able to feel extreme pain and suffering. Seth’s mother is closely attached to her elder
son and may be therefore could not pay attention to her younger son. Neglecting Seth his mother showers her love on Hovie because she might have thought that he cannot express his feelings and emotions and even cannot make a slight movement. Seth feels himself guilty for his brother’s condition. His feeling of guilt is related with his past life when he was not born. There was an accident when Seth was in the womb of his mother. In the accident his elder brother, Hovie was thrown on the metal dashboard. Seth was saved but his brother was very badly injured and could not recover from the injury. Seth himself admits, “that he has irrational guilt because he was out functioning in the real world and his brother was stuck in the room forever. (Doctors, 258)”

Since that time Hovie is in the hospital and his family members meet him regularly. At the beginning when Seth was talking his education, he was not aware about the critical condition of his brother. After becoming a doctor he realizes that Hovie will never recover. Being his brother, he is unable to see the sufferings of his brother. But he couldn’t say a single word to his parents. His parents are satisfied because at least they could see their son alive. But as per Seth’s opinion there is a huge difference between living and life. He says:

There is a difference between living and life. Being alive is just a biological phenomenon. Chimpanzees and bugs even trees and bushes are living things. But a life is more. It means biography as well as biology. (Doctors, 626)

Seth has seen his father and mother, suffering due to Hovie. Whole family suffers due to the critical condition of Hovie. The basic reason of the sufferings of the Lauzarus family is the unrecoverable condition of the son.
Even Seth’s parents are aware that Hovie will never recover but they are living with the hope that someday, somehow anybody could find solution to cure Hovie’s condition. They couldn’t let him die with their bare eyes. Seth has become a doctor but couldn’t do anything for his brother. He accepts the reality that the condition of his brother would never recover. The suffering and pain of Hovie hurts Seth. The decision of Mercy Killing may be because of love and care of Seth for his brother. He has to relieve his brother from the suffering, anguish and pain. He assumes that he is responsible for Hovie’s unrecoverable condition. Due to the guilt he decides to alleviate the suffering of someone who is no longer human. According to him some people deserves the same mercy from the society. As per the American Law, Mercy Killing is a crime but he is of the view that no human should be tortured by a rule book. Even he takes the risk of his own profession for the sake of such unlucky people. His wife Judy is agree with his view and helps him in several cases. Seth uses his knowledge for the act of Mercy Killing. He uses safe way so that after the death nobody would understand the real reason of the patient’s death. He thinks:

“What is it?” Judy asked.

“Potassium chloride,” he answered. “It’s very common mineral we all have in our bodies. It’s needed by the electrolytes in the brain. If you infuse too much of it intravenously, it causes cardiac arrest. It can never cause suspicion because no one would question its presence. (Doctors, 294)
Seth’s psyche regarding to let live his brother in unconscious condition or rescue him from it through ‘Mercy Killing’ leads us to understand various issues of victims and law and social code of conduct. The ‘Mercy Killing’ of Seth focuses on his love for his brother. It is really very difficult for Seth to kill his own brother. The act Seth ends Hovie’s agony, pain and sufferings. Several times Seth performs the act of Mercy Killing in his life. Once while performing such an act, he is caught by FBI, but finally, after listening debates of prosecution and defendant, Jury agree that in such unrecoverable condition no human should be torched by Law Book. The feeling of guilt plays very important role in the life of Seth.

Barney Livingston, the elder son of Harold and Estelle, at first simply doesn’t believe that the ordinary man of ordinary size is his father. His father was a soldier. Since Barney’s birth, his father hasn’t come home. Harold had left home when Barney was a small child. At the end of Second World War Harold comes home. Barney listens from his mother that his father is a soldier and he was fighting against the enemy. He is impressed to know about his father. He assumes that his father must be a tall, body builder, good looking. One day Estelle gets a letter from Harold about his returning; and all the family members including Barney, Warren and Estelle arrives at the railway station to receive Harold. He notices that his father is having extraordinary characteristics. Barney “even he simply could not believe that someone, pallid, thin and tired looking the person standing before him is his own father.” (Doctors, 14) Further Barney thinks that his mother may be wrong. Even
Warren is also confuse and unable to believe him as a father. Warren simply asks Barney, “I thought you said that he was bigger than Dr. Castellano.” (Doctors, 15) Looking at Harold, he becomes disappointed, but that doesn’t decrease his love for him. He takes care of his father in his sickness. Even the responsibility of the father has been accepted by him.

The life of Bennett Landsman also seems affected by the psychological conflict. Bennett Landsman, who is the son of Colonel, after the death of his biological father he is adopted by a Jew couple, Herschel and Hannah. The couple gives him the love of parent. Bennett is not their actual son but they never treated him like an adopted one. The life of Hannah is saved due to the efforts of colonel. Though the couple is Jew but they respect Bennett’s Christian religious beliefs. Every Sunday they used to take him to the nearest church. Bennett admits in the Harvard Medical School to complete his dream of becoming a doctor, because the life of his mother (Hannah) is saved by a Medical student of Britan. He is inspired by him and therefore, decides to become a doctor.

Hannah is more important for Bennett than his own mother. Hannah fulfils the place of mother love. Bennett seems very much aware about the duty which is performed by the Med. school student during Second World War in the Nazi Camp. Saving Hannah’s life Med School student has given new directions to the life of Bennett. With very hard work, he becomes a very good surgeon. The life of Bennett seems motivated by the medical practice of doctor.
During Bennett’s formal education, people are doubtful about his religion. They think he may be Negro or Jew. He seems confused about his own identity. There is a turmoil of identity in his mind. He had asks Herschel that whether he is Jew or Negro. After this question the couple adopts him legally. Now he is their son. Bennett becomes the family member of Herschel but he is the victim of racial discrimination. Without any fault, without any reason, he suffers a lot. Even all the major characters of the novel are married at last of the novel, but Bennett is alone and unhappy. At the end of Doctors Laura and Barney has a son. Seth is married to Judy. Even Peter, Warren and other major characters have their life partners. Some of them married twice or thrice, but Bennett could not find out his own life-partner. In the crowed world he is alone. The agony/pain of loneliness can be seen in his relation with Barney Livingston.

“Ben, can I ask you a serious question?

“At this hour of the night?” He Smiled

Barney hesitated for a moment and then overcoming his diffidence finally asked, “Why are you such an incredible loner ?”

Bennett was not fazed. “You’re the head doctor”, he replied, “You tell me.”

“I can’t that’s why I’m asking. I can’t bear to see my best friend so miserable. For Christsake, talk to me-I won’t be judgmental. Where are the women in your life?”

Bennett once again stared into his glass.

“What woman could relate to me Barn? To the Jew I’m a black, to the blacks I’m a Jew, to the whites I’m a black ,
to the soul brother I’m a pecker. I live in a kind of non Man’s – land.” (Doctors, 632)

The question raised by Bennett is really important. At the age of 40, he has no woman. His life is lonely. He is a good, kind hearted, successful person but alone? He is successful in every field, except in the field of love and marriage.

Segal has wonderfully described Bennett’s life which is full of confusion. Miss Hayes is one of the Bennett’s teachers. Her statement creates several questions in the mind of little Bennett. While teaching into class, she tells the students that God punishes the wicked. Obviously Bennett is a guest in a Jew Family. The Jew family suffers a lot due to cruelty of Nazi soldiers during Second World War. Herschel and Hannah have seen thousands of dead bodies of their own people. Even the soldiers had killed Herschel’s daughter in front of him. The pain and suffering of Jews were miserable. And Bennett is acquaint with the events. Suddenly the question arises in his mind. He thinks that if God punishes wicked, but the thousands, who are killed by Nazi Soldiers were innocent. Then why God punished all those people. Were they wicked? He asks Herschel that if He punishes wicked people, then how come he let so many of your people die? How come he let his own father die? Herschel could not satisfy him completely. He just used to lit a candle, just one solitary candle, in memory of those who perished for no reason that is far beyond his comprehension. The flame of the candle seems burning for those thousands of Jews and for Colonel Linc.
In school too, some students used to call Bennett Jew and some used to say him black. But his immature mind is unable to understand the difference between Jews and Christians. The novelist clearly studies the confusion of Herschel and Ben:

“Dad, what am I, exactly?” He asked Herschel one day.

“I don’t understand Ben.”

“Oh, sometimes the guys at school ask me whether I’m Jewish because you and Mom are. And then somebody else will chime in and say that’s impossible—I couldn’t be anything but ‘colored’. It gets me all mixed up. Now and then I get so confused I just want to go up to my room and lock the door.” (Doctors, 252)

Herschel never exposes his reality of being Jew or Black. He feels sympathy for his family. He assumes that after all both are the victims of discrimination.

Through the novel Doctors, Erich Segal attacks on the profession of doctor. Doctor is considered as a God. Several doctors really devoted to heal their patients for the real satisfaction. Some of them work continually for more than sixteen hour. But few money minded only work to earn money. Some of them like Mrs. Herridge, are interested in making money on the deathbed of patient. During his externship, Barney works at Bellevue hospital. Like every neophyte, he hopes helping all the sick people. But after he realizes that the doctors have nothing to do with the patient’s life history which seems helpful in the cure of psychological diseases. The doctors of the hospital never treat the
patients to recover. Their intention is just to keep them alive and make money. It is amazing for Barney that nobody has ever been relieved from the ward. The attitude of such doctors creates psychological conflict in Barney’s mind. Erich Segal has remarkably depicted the conflict of moral vs immoral which appears in the mind of Barney.

In *Acts of Faith*, Deborah is the elder daughter of Rachel and Rav Moses Luria. From her childhood, she is aware about the discrimination in her own family on the basis of gender. The family follows all the religious beliefs and therefore gives different treatment and education to male and female child. Danny was mere of eight days. After the birth of a male child every pious Jew arranges the ceremony. That was the first time when little Deb realizes that her own religion has separated male and female by the codes of law. The event lays a strong impact on her psyche. “When she was old enough to speak full sentences one of the first thing Deborah asked her mother was where there had been a similar celebration when she was born.” (*Acts of Faith*, 12) Being an innocent child, she has no idea about the religious faith and traditions. In a due course of time she learns that their religion has framed different codes for male and female. It seems quite difficult for Deborah’s mother to satisfy her therefore, she simply says, “though there was no such a celebration when you was born but it doesn’t mean that we don’t love you as much”. (*Acts of Faith*, 12)

Old traditions and religious beliefs create several questions in her mind. Being young child, she is unable to understand the gender discrimination, but
able to feel the discrimination. Throughout the novel several times she faces the conflicts whether to follow the religious belief or not. As per the religious codes, Jewish girl should not talk to non-Jewish person; but she doesn’t care about it. She not only falls in love with Christian boy but also their love crosses all the physical boundaries. She loves Timothy Hogan, who is the illegitimate son of Margaret Hogan. To them, Eli is born out of wedlock. As per the belief, Jewish woman can’t become a Rabbi. But yet she has a strong desire to become rabbi. With hard work and study she becomes the first Jew Rabbi. She considers Rabbi mere as a teacher but meaning of rabbi is different according to her father. “For Rav Moses Luria the function of the rabbi is to lead, to teach and to comfort. And the most important, to be an intermediary between his followers and God.” (Acts of Faith, 06) Throughout the novel, the behavior of Deb is against orthodox Jewish beliefs.

Throughout the novel, she seems in mental turmoil about religious faith. Deb doesn’t believe blindly on any orthodox religious belief and tradition. But she has a strong belief in her religion and God. Pelzer says, “the central characters of Acts of Faith are modern pilgrims facing crises of faith both secular and sacred.”(72) Never-ending, true and solely love of Tim and Deb finally brings them together.

Tim realizes that his mother is struggling with death in a hospital and therefore he goes to meet her. There are several questions in his mind. He needs to know the answer of those questions. The most important question in his mind is about his father. Since childhood nobody tells him the name of his father. But
before telling his father’s name to Tim his mother dies. Later on Tim suspects that Moses Luria can be his father. His mind tries to gather the events in order to support his suspect. Suddenly, the thought of incestuous relationship stuck in his mind. He thinks that he has done incest with the girl who just discovered his sister. He assumes that he has done an act of sin. The confession of Tim before priest suggests that he suffers. He confesses in front of Joe Hanrahan about his fear. Father Hanrahan used to know Tim since his childhood. He has also helped Tim’s mother and Tuck when they were in the problem. The information given by Father Hanrahan plays very important role in resolving the internal conflict of Tim.

The confession of Tim regarding incest confuses father Hanrahan. He thinks that Tim is suffering without any reason. For his suffering, he is partly responsible because Father Hanrahan’s truth could have stop Tim’s suffering. But it is question in front of Father Hanrahan, how to reveal the secret which he has received at confession box. He sees Tim blaming and cursing himself. It is unbearable for him to let Tim suffer without any fault. Finally he gets the way. Due to father Hanrahan’s confession, all fears and confusion disappears from Tim’s mind.

To conclude, Segal’s novels contain psychological conflict in large amount. Most of the characters seem in psychological turmoil due to fear, doubts, religious beliefs and faith, racial and gender discrimination, ignorance etc. Remarkably Segal depicts the psyche of the characters. He seems like the
psychiatrist and read human minds very well. The characters presented by Segal seem internally very strong.

References


