Abstract

Socio-psychological and Relationship Conflicts in the Novels of Erich Segal

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Erich Wolf Segal, an American author, screenwriter and educator was born on 16th June 1937 at Brooklyn. He became the scholar of Greek and Latin literature, publishing books on the Greek writer Euripides and the Roman playwright Plautus. Before writing Love Story his dissertation on Plautus was published as Roman Laughter. Erich Segal was very fluent in German, French, Latin and Greek. He started his teaching career as a professor of comparative literature at Yale University. He taught classics at Harvard too.

Erich Segal was remarkably talented man of an equal passion for teaching and writing. He started his writing career with the novel “Love Story” which was initially written as a screenplay and later adapted into a novel.(Pelzer 19) This novel became very popular among the readers and in a very short period Erich Segal has become a famous writer. The novel Love Story claimed the best seller book was nominated for the 1971s National Book Award. And even adapted movie also acclaimed Seven Academy Awards. The novelist also won Golden Globe for the screenplay. After his first book he became very popular among the readers but till date not accepted by critics. After listing some Segal’s academic books, The Times Obit concluded: “None has appeared on The Times best seller list”.

Erich Segal is an excellent story teller; his novels are full of inspiration and motivation. The characters of Segal’s novels are grounded on the realistic base and satisfy the reader, reading for self inspiration. In Segal’s writing there is every essential material to self motivate the reader. Segal himself has accepted the truth that life is with full of conflict. Without conflict nothing can be changed. Erich Segal’s all selected works for research work attempt to reveal the truth about confused state of human mind. His characters are fully aware that without conflict no change can take place but yet they don’t want to hurt anybody.
The proposed research work deals with the *socio-psychological and relationship conflicts* in the select novels of Erich Segal: *Love Story, Oliver's Story, Man Woman and Child, The Class, Doctors, Acts of Faith* and *Prizes*.

Conflict is inherent in human relations. This doesn’t mean that every social relationship is entirely or even partly conflicting all the time. Nor does it mean that every underlying conflict in relationship will be expressed with the same degree and kind of hostility or violence. Conflicts vary in their bases, their duration, their mode of settlement, their outcomes and their consequences according to cultural, social, geographical and economical bias. The present research work has focused on the conditions which creates up havoc and even disturbs the Social existed set up inpacketing as far as psyche and relationship is concerns. Causes of conflict, their consequences are also studied. The research work focuses on several types of conflict which can be seen in Segal’s novels. Basically the study revolves around social, psychological and relationship conflicts. In social conflict, inter-religion conflict, conflict between Blacks and Whites, intra-religion conflict and international conflict of Israel and Arab countries are studied.

The term conflict was first described in ancient Greek literature as the Agon, or central contest in tragedy. Aristotle says that in order to create interest in the literary work hero must have a single conflict. The concept of conflict is concerned not only with the literature but also with the various subjects like Sociology, Psychology, Political Science, and other Science. Today’s so called modern society is the product of thousands years conflicts. The social changes cannot take place without conflict. World history teaches the lesson that not a single change in society, politics and religion occurred without conflict. Conflict has been playing a very important role in the process of changing old traditions, beliefs, faith, cultures etc. In order to survive, human being must fulfill several basic needs. To fulfill all these needs human being is in conflict with another. Conflict lives with human being in the whole journey of life from birth to death.

Conflict is one of the social processes which come in individual’s mind from competition or cooperation. It has some positive as well as negative impacts on human life and society.
With the help of conflict people can get best solutions of the problem which they are facing. Though conflict comes from competition or cooperation but these two elements cannot always work together. Conflict has a positive aspect when it has been resolved in mutual way, but it will be negative when it brings chaotic situation or even disaster.

Conflict can be divided into External and Internal. A campaign that takes place in the mind of the character is called Internal Conflict. It is a struggle within oneself, a situation of dilemma in which the character is caught. This can be the conflict between love and hate, good and evil, strength and weakness etc. Internal conflict is a universal emotion in people. Sometime the character may deal with own internal mixed feelings or emotions. For example, a character may have to decide between right or wrong or between two solutions of a same problem. It affects only a single person and therefore can be called a characteristic of internal conflict. The outer conflict is the campaign or struggle with a force outside oneself. The outside force or forces may be a character, community or nature. An outer conflict may be kind of an argument with somebody.

The conflict in Erich Segal’s novel plays a decisive role. However, the ‘Conflict’ as a theme itself is a multidimensional with theoretical background and historical significance in various authors. Author’s background also plays a vital role in some cases. If the writer had experienced the conflict in his life or observed it closely then it is possible that the conflict may reflect into his own literary work. Such conflict can be autobiographical. If the author has experienced or closely observed poverty, economical distress, marriage problems, opposition of society or illusion in his life then his or her writing may reflect such signs. Conflict is the necessary element of the fictional work and has five basic forms such as person versus person, person versus self, person versus nature, person versus society, and person versus God.

Erich Segal’s fictional world is strange. His protagonists seek to confront the mystery of life. The work of Erich Segal represents a unique depiction of the dual between internal and external conflict. It also catches the perplexity of the individual’s mind, confronted with the overbearing socio-cultural environment and the ever-beckoning modern promise of self gratification.
Social Conflict

Present chapter deals with social conflicts which arise due to the issues like, child labour, sweetshop labour, racial discrimination, exploitation of workers and difference in religious beliefs and faiths. The delineation of social conflicts in the novels of Erich Segal encompasses cultural, political, religious and economical conflicts of the societies. When the crisis appears between person and society known as social conflict and when the conflict appears in two different religions like Hindu-Muslim, Christian-Muslim it is called as Religious Conflict. Both types of conflicts are external conflict. When individual struggles with his own feelings, emotions and thoughts and finds himself/herself in a dilemma whether to do the act or not that is called psychological conflict which can be included into internal conflict. The crisis or conflict between two people of same or different gender known as relationship conflict. And the very bases of social, political and cultural conflicts are take place from the relationship conflict. All the above types can be divided into only two types i.e. external and internal conflict.

The analysis of the entire corpus of Erich Segal’s novels demonstrates that there is a pattern in his work. The inborn urge to decide life’s meaning in positive terms leads Segal’s protagonists to engage an incessant war against challenging situation. The writer’s ability of critical judgment is himself out through analysis of novels. The socio-economic and cultural background of the period leads Segal for the basis of conflicts in his novels. Being the observer, Erich Segal remarkably delineates various issues of social complications arises due to different structure of societies, relationship of groups, gender consciousness, culture and social mechanism. The issue of conflict is very important to understand and analyze any of the work of Erich Segal. Some characters of the Erich Segal’s novels are autobiographical in nature. His life-Sketch is itself a complex and complicated on various grounds. The protagonists of Erich Segal have to suffer internally and externally and at last they find redemption which leads them to the salvation.

Psychological Conflict
The present chapter Psychological Conflict deals with events which and are responsible for the confusion of mind while taking certain decisions. There are several situations in novels which causes psychological conflicts in the minds of various characters. The situations make the characters confuse. They seem in turmoil and could not easily able to decide whether to do this or that. The novelist has taken efforts to disclose the psychological confusion state of the modern people due to the societal, cultural and political obligations. Though the masses he has accepted some traditional values for the sake of family and social institution so that social cultural mechanism may run smoothly. But these values directly indirectly affects individual though the value has democratic significance. To be socio-cultural follower of an individual (self) makes some unrest psychologically. The novelist has remarkably discloses the various issues of psychological conflicts in his novels.

Psychological conflict is a situation in which a person is motivated to engage in two or more mutually exclusive activities. In the monogamous society it is very difficult for the man to marry two women at the same time, no matter how beautiful and attractive they are to him. It is the situation in which the individual is in confusion. His heart says one thing which is not acceptable to the brain. The individual is in dwelling. Psychological conflict may occur on many different levels.

Erich Segal has very remarkably mixed the historical characters with his imagination. Psychological conflict appears in most of the Erich Segal’s novels. Psychological state plays important role in the development of plot as well as the story. Almost in all of Segal’s novels Psychological conflict is inseparable part.

Some autobiographical elements also can be observed in *The Class* and *Acts of Faith*. Most part of the novel is fictitious/imaginative but very craftily Segal he has woven characters into actual historical events. For e.g. A member of Israeli army, Jason sees action in the Sid-Day war of 1967, The American President John Kennedy’s assassination etc.

**Relationship Conflict**

The present chapter deals with the conflict between husband-wife, parent-children and man-woman relationships. Conflict in family may occur due to wealth,
property, marriage, external affairs, modern views, economical distress, over expectations….etc. these are the general causes which lead to disturb family relationship. Due to the above causes the family atmosphere disturbs. The family members become each other’s enemies. Even sometime forgets the blood relations and for the sake of property they tries to kill one another. There are several events in the novels of Erich Segal where the relationship conflict is notable.

In most of the Erich Segal’s work, conflict is one of the most prominent themes. The characters of Erich Segal’s are really different than other writers and always struggle with the society and with self too. The old traditions, beliefs, rules and regulations also make suffer to these characters. The protagonists of Erich Segal’s novels are very strong and cannot be defeated easily. They fight against the unfavorable conditions and find out their own way with the help of strong will and the ability. They make the condition favorable with the help of conflict and create their own ways. All the major characters of Erich Segal’s novel have the potential to struggle till the last moment of the life. In each and every society one can find some beliefs and traditions. In society there are few people who can fulfill all their needs and live luxuriously and some people struggle at each and every step.

Nearly about all his novels is the journey of all his protagonists from innocence to experience and from ignorance to enlightenment. Their journeys challenge them to reevaluate their dreams and revise their notion of success. At the end of the novel all the protagonists or major characters have learned important lessons about life and about self.

The real cause of sufferings of Segal’s most of the characters is greediness. Greed for love, physical pleasure, wealth, reputation, higher status in society and power is responsible for their sufferings and pain. Greed for worldly pleasure is very prominent in most of all his novels. Greed causes conflicts mostly in the novels.

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