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Fredrick Ruban A
M. Phil., Research scholar
Department of English
Karunya University
Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu,
India.

Tangles of Love: A Predominating Impression in Ian McEwan's *Enduring Love*

Fredrick Ruban A

Abstract

The research paper "Tangles of Love: A Predominating Impression in Ian McEwan's *Enduring Love*" explores the kinds of love by tracing their background. *Enduring Love* is a British fiction begins with an arresting scene, a hot air balloon catastrophe. This horrific event deeply affects the narrator, Joe Rose, a freelance science writer, and his partner Clarissa, a Romanticist English lecturer, but its subsequent events to an extreme. Shortly after the balloon episode, Jed Parry contacts Joe because he believes that he and Joe have forged a profound connection in the emotional intensity of the tragedy. The novel portrays the healthy love between Joe Rose and Clarissa Mellon, Mr. and Mrs. Logan and the impassioned unhealthy love of an orphan, Jed Parry. The paper knits the episodes of healthy and unhealthy love those prevail in each of the characters of the novel.

Keywords: Passion, obsession, healthy love, unhealthy love, suspicion.

Introduction

Enduring Love, published in 1997 is about the strength and fragility of married love and the intervention of unhealthy love by Ian McEwan, a postmodern writer and a Booker Prize winner. Though he is a notorious novelist; well-known for his experiential and scientific style, the remark of Bill Bryson on *Enduring Love*:

“Taut with narrative excitement and suspense... a novel of rich diversity that triumphantly integrates imagination and intelligence, rationality and emotional alertness. I cannot remember the last time I read a novel so beautifully written or utterly compelling from the very first page.”

Enduring Love is a timeless tale about the way fate and faith shape the relationships. Joe Rose is the central character, fond of science and his wife, Clarissa: an English professor and an ardent fan of Keats. Ian McEwan has placed Joe as a character to endure the love of his wife Clarissa and a young man, Jed Parry. The story revolves around the family of Joe and Dr. John Logan, and the isolated Jed Parry, and brightens the way that kinds of love are tangled by distinguishes healthy and unhealthy love vividly.

The story begins with a romantic appeal with the picnic as a symbol of reunion celebration of Joe and Clarissa in a green-lawn named Chiltern Hills. When Joe is about to open the alcoholic bottle he hears a scream, it is a hot-helium balloon which disturbs them by dwindling their happiness. The helium balloon that has gone away from the anchor carries Harry, a ten-year-old boy; people try saving him and this circumstance makes Joe fall in the eyes of Jed which consequently brings destruction.

Healthy Love

Healthy love is mutual; the love that exists between Joe Rose and Clarissa Mellon is a paradigm. Joe, a young man, has been married for seven years yet does not have a child due to routine surgery to his wife Clarissa in her twenties. It is believed that her medical reports had been confused with another woman's report. However, it is not proved and, she has buried the sadness imperceptibly, and builds her life again. Naturally, Clarissa Mellon loves children much; hence she has begun to adore children of others and has become god mother of many, which explicates her craving love for children. Five years before the balloon accident, when Joe and Clarissa had known each other for two years, Marjorie, a good friend

Correspondence

Fredrick Ruban A
M. Phil., Research scholar
Department of English
Karunya University
Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu,
India.

from her University days, had lost her four-week-old baby to a rare bacterial infection. Clarissa had been to Manchester to see the baby when it was five days old and had spent a week there helping to look after it. The news of the baby's death cut her down and she plunged into grief. She not only loves her husband and literature but also kids, therefore, she mourned for the death of her friend's child considering it as her own.

She has a great love for her husband and he also reciprocates the same. Although they both love each other ardently, they often enter into silly troubles due to their rationality and later they get reconciled and make love. Though they are working entirely in two different areas, they share even silly matters to build their life on love and trust. As for as Joe is concerned, in the beginning, he used to share all the secrets but later the balloon accident he deletes twenty-nine messages sent by Jed. When he discloses this to Clarissa, she replies with the seed of suspicion which is just sown in her mind, but still she believes firmly that he loves her truly. On the way back to her residence from the University with a mass of five kilograms of books, she confesses that her husband is good at looking after her; she has great trust and belief in him.

Clarissa's love for Joe is well-described in the beginning chapters. After the balloon accident, he shows his scorched palms to his wife. His palms are fire scorched due to his over effort on pulling down the balloon and it has brought severe wound in his palms. When he shows his scorched palms, with a love she takes it towards her lips and kisses it; thus her love for Joe Rose is vivid. Furthermore, When Clarissa writes a letter to her partner, in which she refers Jed Parry as a madman and reveals the secret for their seven years love life in a single line, "We have loved each other passionately and loyally" *Enduring Love* (219).

Joe Rose travels to Oxford to meet Jean Logan and her two children, a daughter named Rachael and a son Leo. His visit to Oxford reflects his care and concern for Dr. Logan family. Jean has a prolonged grief for losing her husband more than that she is also filled with suspicion over the relationship of John Logan. She brings a silk scarf and asks Joe to smell it but he says he cannot smell of anything. But she says for her it smells of rose water and added that she has never used rose water in her life, this shows her suspicion on her late husband. She confesses outrageously that she will kill the woman if she finds her. When she seeks the help of Joe in finding out the owner of the scarf he assures her that he will do his best to find out what has really happened on that day and becomes very friendly with Logan's children. At the end of the novel, Joe reaches the home of Mr. Logan in Oxford and talks with the open heart. He plays with Rachael and Leo and also he takes them beside the river. This shows that he is a man with great enduring power who easily becomes friendly with children.

Joe and Clarissa meet Jean Logan, to reveal the truth, that as a result of Joe's inquiries he has come to know that John Logan was not having an affair, as his wife believed, but had given a gift to two secret lovers, the evidence of whose presence in the car Jean has misinterpreted. Though Logan's fidelity is restored to his wife she has to assume the burden of her own misplaced suspicion. Joe and Clarissa are reconciled and they explain to the Logan children the invisible forces that hold the world together, it is a factual explanation that has clear symbolic resonances for human relationships.

Unhealthy Love

Unhealthy love is not mutual so the sufferer tries simply to please the one he loves passionately, moreover it is addictive and keep locked up in stagnant periods. *Enduring Love* portrays the unhealthy love quite well in the light of psychological standpoint.

In *Enduring Love*, a new love embarks into the life of Joe and Clarissa in the form of Jed Parry and gets entangled. When the love progresses it becomes more and more complicated and it takes away peace. Jed sees Joe for the first time in the balloon accident and that catastrophe makes them exchange a glance. In the balloon incident, it is John Logan who puts his entire effort to pull down the balloon but it ends in vain. Ultimately, he falls dead on the lawn and Joe moves to see the corpse followed by Jed. Joe informs police and ambulance but Jed calls him to kneel and pray with him in front of the corpse. Initially, Joe denies because he strictly follows science and has no religious faith but then Jed insists that they should pray. That night he receives a proposal call from Jed around 2.00 a.m., he is shocked and lies to his wife saying it as a wrong number. This embarks a drift between Joe and Clarissa and the strength of their faith is shaken.

The sign of true love between a husband and wife is having no secrets personally and sharing everything, believing this, Joe Rose reveals the proposal call of Jed Parry to Clarissa later but she fails to take that as a serious matter. She says that Jed Parry is, "a harmless fellow with a strange notion" *Enduring Love* (61). Jed's love for Joe becomes steadfast and it is expressed through his behaviour, such as moving near to Joe's apartment and trying to capture his attention. His overwhelming love for Joe drives him to behave in the most eccentric manner and it makes Joe consider him a madman. Jed Parry says, "I can't control my feelings the way you can, and 'I know this gives you power over me, but there's nothing I can do about it'" *Enduring Love* (64).

Jed says his mission is to bring Joe to Christ through his love but it is always mysterious and torturing for Joe but he patiently bears it. His appearance seems terrible but his voice sweeps it out, "To bring you to God, through love, but I know that the Christ is within you. At some level, you know it too" *Enduring Love* (66). He also uses the fascinating sentence which seems as a reason for his love, "the purpose is to bring you to the Christ that is in you and that is you" *Enduring Love* (66). He begins tormenting Joe by going after him and this behaviour seems to test Joe's patience. However, he evades from Jed throwing him in the middle of traffic which appears as an escape from Jed.

Since Joe Rose is a science writer he engages himself in producing an article, titled smile. When he goes to browse notes on this topic he gets tangled with Jed. This time, he loses his patience and thinks that he cannot endure the love torture anymore so, he seeks the help of police but he could not get their support; the policeman responds as, "I'm sorry caller this is not a police matter" *Enduring Love* (74).

The feel and love of Jed for Joe seems to be unreasonable throughout the novel but still his abnormalities make him run after Joe as a dog. He sends letters to Joe Rose which contains all his thoughts and plans about their life and it appears terribly a nuisance for Joe Rose. He reasons his love for Joe in a letter as, "I praise God that He has sent me to you. I know there is difficulty and pain ahead of us, but the path that He sets us on is hard for a purpose" *Enduring Love* (93). Jed dreams much about Joe and this clues Joe to analyse Jed's character and behaviour from a scientific

standpoint which eventually makes him conclude, Jed is suffering from 'De Clerambault's Syndrome': a disease which makes the affected person believe that someone is in love with him/her. Moreover, Jed pens his love and it discloses that he is obsessed with Joe and he expects Joe to reciprocate it. He articulates that he has a beautiful home in Frogmal Lane which is surrounded by lawns and he has inherited that from her mother who died of cancer. His father is also no more and he is alone in his home he boasts, "I am, the king of my castle which God has granted to me for a purpose of his own" *Enduring Love* (95). He wishes to keep Joe in his beautiful house and he feels the presence of Joe always around him, his feeling goes to an extreme level especially, whenever he writes letters to him. He challenges Joe stating that "I know that you'll come to God, I'm going to mend your rift with God through the healing power of love" *Enduring Love* (97). Joe receives the letter and reads it during his breakfast and passes it to Clarissa Mellon, after reading, they both agree his insanity.

Jed Parry sends a second letter to Rose after buying all the articles those are written by Joe, in order to know more about him. In his second letter he writes, he has prayed for him and also raises a question regarding his affair. He challenges Joe's scientific writings and feels bitter and argues, "How is it possible to love God and love you at the same time?" *Enduring Love* (134) and he gives the answer behind it, "through faith alone, Joe. Not through facts, or pretend facts, or intellectual arrogance, but by trusting in God's wisdom and love as a living presence in our lives" *Enduring Love* (134). He tries to make Joe aware of the presence of God, "you can meet all your needs on your own. But without an awareness of God's loves you are living in a desert" *Enduring Love* (135). He further writes that his behaviour towards him may seem like the behaviour of a madman, idiot patient and a street beggar but all these are only to offer his love and deliver him. He accuses his denials, refusals and all his articles and books are the little stampings of a tried infant, he says, "My brain was like a washing machine – churning and spinning, full of your dirty washing" *Enduring Love* (137). Joe rejects God; it seems to Jed that he is also being rejected by him, subsequently, he gives a request to accept him which is equal to accepting God, and begs not to desert him and destroy the letter.

Conclusion

Incessantly, Joe smells the threat of Jed indirectly and decides to report it to Inspector but like his first effort the latter one is also in vain. Finally, Joe loses his patience when he realises that even his wife suspects him and is alone and nobody is there to believe him. He decides to buy a gun from Johnny to put an end to Jed's mad behaviour in order to save his married life; this unfolds his love for his sweet Clarissa. It also enlightens the consequence of tangles of love and the novelist's inclination towards the healthy relationship. However, Ian McEwan upholds the healthy love and reconstructs the married life of Joe Rose and Clarissa Mellon. But Jed Parry is in pathetic condition; he is considered as an insane and put into asylum.

Enduring Love has three endings, each of which focuses on a different perspective: Clarissa's emotional and intuitive, Joe's clinical and scientific and Parry's religious and impassioned. Each reflecting the temperaments and logics of the three main characters, concerned with an understanding of human nature existing at the intersection of biology, anthropology,

and psychology. Love is itself seen in different ways: Clarissa sees it in terms of Romantic ideals, Parry understands it as a gift of God, while Joe has a scientific worldview, in which human beings are like "two atoms of hydrogen, one of oxygen, bound together by a mysterious powerful force" *Enduring Love* (225).

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