

# Conjugal Love and Psychological Sanity: A Study on the Need of Mutual Love in Paula Hawkins’ *The Girl on the Train*

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## ABSTRACT

Happiness is something that cannot be bought but it is to be experienced. The best way to experience and attain happiness is through love and it is a form of passion and dedication towards a relationship. Love is essential to sustain any relationship and to keep the world a better place to live in. Like any other relationship, love between married couples is indispensable for the overall well being of an individual as it is the source of emotional support throughout the adulthood. The need of love in marriage is endless without which it is impossible to be selfless and patience which are the keys to make the marital relationship a successful one. ‘Megan Hipwell’ from the novel *The Girl on the Train* by Paula Hawkins has a troubled past and finds her life to be boring. Though she is married to Scott she is not committed and finds him to be overprotective and inattentive at some instances. This paper analyses the importance of mutual trust, love, passion and commitment in a conjugal relationship and how the lack of all these things would affect ones stability and sanity.

**Key words: Love, Conjugal, Happiness, Sanity, Patience.**

*The Girl on the Train* is a novel written by Paula Hawkins, a British author. She began to write romantic comedy fiction around 2009 but didn’t succeed in getting commercial break through until she started writing some dark and serious stories. *The Girl on the Train* written in 2015 is her best-selling novel and it is a psychological thriller in which she gives the first person narratives of three different women and their troubles in their relationships. It also has the themes of alcohol and drug abuse along with domestic violence. ‘Megan Hipwell’ faces the series of conflicts throughout the novel due the sufferings she faced in her childhood and the relationship she’s having with her husband Scott and other past experiences and illegal affairs she has been involving in the due course.

Sharing a life with someone is definitely a challenging task and it takes a lot of work and commitment to make it happy and successful. It is important to be honest with each other with mutual trust and hope to keep the marriage a healthy one. Both the partner should strive hard and motivate each other to enjoy the life to the fullest. Life of Megan was not as she expected and being the victim of the childhood neglect and traumatizing past experiences she suffers a lot with trust issues. All these past life of her is unknown to Scott. Even before she got married to Scott she had a baby at the age of seventeen who is no

more. She somehow manages to enter into marital relationship with Scott because of the need to be loved and to ward off her insecurity of being alone from the young age. Though she is married and loves Scott she restricts herself from letting her past life to her husband because of the fact that he might abandon her if he happens to know the truth.

The hesitation she has to disclose her past life with her husband expounds that though he married Megan he didn't take much effort to gain the hope and trust of Megan. He blindly accepted her as her life partner and took no effort to unveil her past to make her feel safe and secure at the present. Apart from that, though he gave freedom to do whatever she wished he failed to analyze that something wrong was going on with her.

Robert Sternberg in his 'triangular love theory' proposes that there are three main components of love to attain a healthy and long lasting relationship. Those are intimacy, passion and commitment. Passion is defined as the strong feeling or attachment for something. In conjugal relationship it is associated with strong romantic or the sexual feeling over the partner. Intimacy is the feeling of belongingness or attachment to each other which aids in strengthening the bond. Commitment is about a strong urge to be connected to one another and also the promise to stay loyal to each other. Commitment increases the intensity of love and none of the act of Scott proves that he is committed to Megan and his relationship he shares with her. Even when Megan told him that she finds it difficult to reveal her past to him and to those who are known to her he effortlessly tells, "that's the point, you can say anything to strangers" (42). This approach of him upsets her psychologically and she finds it very hard to tackle the situation she is in. As a husband he was not supportive enough and he is not committed to make her life a peaceful one. He just gives freedom to whatever decision she takes to keep her happy but he fails to understand that the real happiness lies only in being passionate about each other.

Commitment is necessary to keep the marriage intact. The inattentive nature of her husband and the lack of sincerity towards their relationship make her psychologically unstable and end up becoming emotionally detached. She began to detach herself from everything ones fascinated her. The part of being a wife depressed her a lot and she feels "I can't do this, I can't just be a wife. I don't understand how anyone does it – there is literally nothing to do but wait. Wait for a man to come home and love you. Either that, or look around for something to distract you" (42). This thought of her is due to the trauma she is been facing throughout her married life. This impaired her ability to function and she ended up by doing insane things that are unlikely of a wife. Lack of love and support from her husband and the inconsiderate attitude of him worsened her psychological condition.

Displeased with the deeds of her husband she enters into the series of relationship with others that are extramarital to tackle the conflicts she's been facing daily. Like any other women Megan crave for emotional intimacy with her husband and she becomes discarded by the fact that he is emotionally unresponsive. Being a house wife she has none to communicate with and feels that she's become completely isolated. This made her seek companionship in others which eventually created an opportunity for infidelity. Megan in the due course to overcome her loneliness and to fill the void in her life steps into relationship with both men named Tom, who is married and with Kamal Abdic, a therapist. Due to the daunting

experiences she had prior she even fails to analyze the real motive of Tom and the good motive of the therapist and becomes heavily obsessed with them.

The obsession she has with them made her take insane decisions. She never wants them to let go and she thought of having control over them. When Tom tells Megan that they should stop what they are doing as it is bad for both their life, she was very sure that this wouldn't be the last time they are meeting and that Tom would come for her. Though she knew that he is married and also a father a new born baby she never wanted to let him go and wanted the grip of him to feel secure.

This can't happen again, Megan. You know it can't. We can't keep doing this. And he was right, I know we can't. We shouldn't, we ought not to, but we will. It won't be the last time. He won't say no to me. I was thinking about it on the way home, and that's the thing I like most about it, having power over someone. That's the intoxicating thing (73).

Megan was even ready to denounce her prestige and was also ready to run away with them without considering the after effects of it and without taking into account what would people around think of her. Though Kamal, the therapist was aware of her situation and tried hard to help her out she was not in a state to accept the reality. It is because the loneliness and the emotional unresponsiveness she experienced from her incapacitated husband made her psychologically insane to take right decisions and to scrutinize the after math of such decisions.

The tendency of wanting excessive reassurance is also the reason for becoming obsessed with someone. As she didn't reciprocate any sort of comfort and encouragement from her husband Scott, she became obsessed with the extramarital relationships she is into. The obsession she has on them and the fear that they might abandon her also turned her to become manipulative. She strongly sticks over to whatever decision she takes and becomes self centered that she never bothers about how others would be affected by her choices. Even when her husband Scott is with her in the home she always thought of Tom and wanted him to be by her side badly. So whenever her husband is little away from her sight she does every possible step to contact Tom or see him as he is her neighbor. If Tom refuses to meet her she would threaten him by asserting that, "I tell him that I am in the park, that I'll wait for him there, but if he doesn't come, that's it, I'm coming round to the house. This is his last chance (373).

The fear that they might abandon her and that she might become isolated made her to become manipulative to achieve or to attain what she desires. She abuses them emotionally to achieve what she wanted. Manipulation is not a healthy approach to attain someone's love and approval. It has a wide range of psychological ill effects and the foremost thing is disconnecting from the authentic self. Also the constant urge to keep someone under the control will become a barrier to personal development and to differentiate good things from evil. Being manipulative is bad for themselves and also to those who surround them. Mutual love is mandate in marital relationship to keep the commitment alive and to sustain it. Psychological closeness is necessary as it entails overall well being of an individual and that it also provides the sense of belonging.

According to Roy Baumeister and Mark Leary (1995) the fundamental human need is the need to belong which aids in maintaining a positive, healthy and long lasting interpersonal relationships. The lack of

love and care from her husband made Megan to lose her sanity and she ended up becoming manipulative. So there is nothing like the comfort and the safety that there is someone to be cared of. Thus this paper concludes by telling that the mutual understanding and the reciprocation of love is indispensable in the marital relationship for the emotional well being of an individual and to remain psychologically sane.

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