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Ethics of Memory in Nicholas Spark's *Dear John*

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Letter of Approval

The Thesis entitled “The Ethics of Memory in Nicholas Sparks *Dear John*” Submitted to Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, by Sunil Subedi has been approved by the under designed members of research committee.

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Abstract

*The purpose of this research is to examine Nicholas Sparks's *Dear John* by implementing the philosophy of Avishai Margalit's *The Ethics of Memory* and Emmanuel Levinas's view on 'responsibility'. *Dear John* presents the failure of the protagonist John Tyree who is unable to balance his ethical and moral relations. The novel constitutes his shared past and collective memories. His memories conjure up emotion and sentiment which binds him. Memory entails much caring to those people who are not his people. The present research studies the problems of John for maintaining good relationship with his people. It is due to his obligatory duty towards nation as being an army, aggravated manner and his inability to prioritize his people and his inability to recognize disloyal people. He faces disloyalty and betrayal by those who he thinks are his people. His relationship with his father represents communication gap from the beginning on one hand. On another hand he distributes his father's coins collection to Tim which represents his obligatory responsibility, which occurs due to the imbalance of ethics in protagonist's life.*

John, the protagonist of the novel as well as the representative of modern tragic hero, represents lose of self, failed inheritance and finance due to his inability to recognize ethical and moral relations. He faces betrayal by those people who he considers are his people and on the contrary of it he tries to celebrate that disloyalty of those people who betray him. Likewise, his duty estranges him from his beloved Savannah, which excessively depresses him. His inability to keep good relation with his father makes him lonely. Moreover, the other characters of Sparks also have the inability to recognize their nearest and dearest peoples' sacrifices, for instance Savannah's incapability to recognize John's unfeigned love. Female protagonist

Savannah's letter addressing *Dear John* to John represents her incapability to wait for him seems unfaithful. Savannah's difficulty for waiting to marry John due to Tim's vulnerable condition shows Savannah's morality not an ethical in front of John's faith to her. After Tim and Savannah marriage John's visit to meet Savannah is also his failure. The novel presents the different sorts of emotional factors of the characters which lead to different duties to their life and duty comes as a reason to live a lie for Sparks's characters. It is because being selflessness is obligatory here. John Tyree, the protagonist is nostalgic as well as frustrated. On the road of pursuing love and duty he has to suffer because of his inability to complete his real responsibilities as a son, and as being a lover. At first, he suffers from alienation due to his communication gap with his father, secondly by his burdensome duty in army service after September 11 and at last his unsuccessful love towards Savannah remains only as a memory.

In the novel, John and his father's relation is full of communication gaps since the beginning. Likewise, his love to his beloved Savannah represents long distance loves who later on turns to be Tim's wife that results frustration to their life. The main causes of this type of shares in their life are the disloyalties in their relationships which also results burdensome responsibility. That is the failure of modern men. At first, When John meets Savannah; he realizes he is ready to make some changes in his life but in the long run he regrets for what he does with Savannah and with his dad. Tim, in another hand who is considered to be guided by morality and selflessness comes to prove wrong when he marries to Savannah. It is because he himself supports John and Savannah relationship from the beginning as being their close friends. This is Tim's disloyalty. Later on, when he says he loves Savannah since his childhood age but he does not like to tell this until Savannah does not deserve him. This expression seems Tim's cheating type of expression for John even if that is real. Similarly, Bill

Tyree, the father of John does not like to talk about John's mother to John, which creates depression in between. Even the name of his mother is also not stated in the novel. So, this is the story of the failure which does not consist nearest and dearest peoples' love and sacrifices as successfully rather it consists of disloyalty, cheating and depression in relationships for that each party is suffering.

In another hand, John shows the goodness and honesty at those places where he cannot get back as much he gives which causes him to suffer. Duties of John are self made and his selfless duty becomes an enough reason for him to live in nostalgia. He is dutiful even when he has mental agony and mood disorder. He faces meaningless tragedy while he is motivated for his duty and morality but most of the times he remains alienated, frustrated and regretted for what he does to his people. Same is the case to Savannah as well; when she is unable to recognize her lover's sacrifice to her and now she is married to Tim that results her to suffer. At first sight it seems betray in love and faith but in fact it is the characters inability to recognize relationship ethics that results failure.

Dear John is one of the success bestselling romance novels written in 2006 from both First and third person point of views. Basically the novel is about nostalgia of the protagonist, where memory of alienation, separation and sense of loss issues are raised in the modern context.

John Tyree, a boy, from North Carolina, who comes home on holiday leave from the army service. While on leave, he meets Savannah, they fall in love and Savannah promises John that she will await him to marry till the accomplishment of his duty. They write letters to each other to remain in touch and maintain their long distance relationship. However, Unfortunate incident of September 11 forces John to reenlist in the army. The incident is the Pentagon and Twin Towers attack by the

terrorists that causes John to extend his duty for a couple of years. They begin to part when Savannah falls in love with another man, because she now wants an easy relationship and eventually she sends John a letter that says she is in love with someone else. John is heartbroken by Savannah's betrayal to him and they stop communicating. Later on, when in home visit he comes to know that his father has died. He proceeds for his father's funeral procession and after that goes for Lenoir from Wilmington. There he knows that Savannah is now a wife of Tim. Savannah tells John that Tim is suffering from Melanoma and that he is soon going to die, unless he get better treatment in another hospital. John decides to donate for Tim's treatment to be happy partially and for the sake of humanity, so that he donates his father's coins collection for Tim's treatment fund and goes back to Iraq.

Nicholas Sparks' *Dear John* has many comments of his critics. In this research, the researcher studies and uses different sorts of reviews from the review books and internet, where only a few critics try to depict Mr. John's ethics and about his nostalgia. Concerning about Sparks's writing in *Literary Love Making in Nicholas Sparks Novels: Finding the Balance Between the writers life and writers work in bestselling Romantic Love* Ryan Spanish writes:

Not only has Sparks chosen a difficult topic to write about, but he also complicates the task by writing from varying gendered perspectives. He does not uniformly write from the male of view. In his novels, he has ventured through internal narratives from both genders as well as all different ages from child to senior citizen. (39)

With this, Nicholas Sparks is known for not easier to male perspectives but for complications and mastery both. In the novel *Dear John* he presents the first person male narrative to appeal the audiences pathetically. As a matter of fact Sparks shows

how the protagonist has to be selfless even in harder conditions of everyday phenomena. In one hand he is angry and rebellious, and in another he is moralistic and courteous.

Daily Mail mentions “Achingly moving . . . will have you weeping for the joy and tragedy of it all” (1). Here Sparks is combining romantic love with tragic elements in the novel. At first the scenario of novel is somehow joyous. Later on when they have to part for their duties and responsibilities, the cost of love turns as a burdensome result when there come communication gap in between.

New York Times mentions “The basic necessities of a romantic tearjerker are there in the description: love and loss (and then, in the best- case scenario, love again)” (1). This is a romantic sob story, which contains romantic elements. The young couple meet in a beach and who suddenly fall in love within the period of two weeks and the lovers’ limited time to make for love sets apart them. Their long distance relationship cannot last for long due to the love of another guy Tim. Both Tim and John are unconditional and selfless in many ways. In this triangular story of love, one has to compromise for sure. In the other the death of John’s father and the loss of true love and the scene of love even after loss is the very scenario of the novel.

Book Page mentions “Nicholas Sparks’s waves his magic wand once again, this time over the ideal of transformational love... Sparks is a modern master of faithful love stories and road-not-taken fables written in uncluttered prose” (1). Sparks’s way of dealing with language shows there is more purity in love. Being responsible person for the sake of others is presented in the very novel. His novels are mostly about unconditional, unfeigned love stories. But his novels also deal with vastly controversial issues such as romance and moral relativism and this idea is played out on many different levels of the very novel. He develops the theme of

simplicity on romance and tragedy. *Dear John* is none other than relationship responsibility, morality as well as about failure. His novels include the themes of Christianity, love, tragedy, and fate. His leave to army duty has disastrous effects upon him as well as Savannah and his father. He even does not care for self improvement and economic security of life rather does for the sake of Tim, who is none to him if Savannah is not his beloved.

Likewise, *Rapport* mentions “A gentle, old fashioned romance that reminds us just how powerful love can be” (1). The young lovers are sending love letters written by their own hands. Twenty-First centuries is the era of great development in science and technology, when the setting time is 2001 onward, the way of authors showing of love making between John, Savannah shows modern characteristics of early World War period. This is old-fashioned, where young lovers are connecting their love relation through hand-written love letters.

After analyzing the idea “Savannah, always Savannah, everything on this trip, everything about my life, I have realized, always led back to her” (200) the critic Esa Yolanda Putri says, “The author wants the reader know how strong John’s feeling to Savannah that on his mind, there is only one name ‘Savannah’. Moreover, in that statement, the author also hopes the readers can feel their powerful true love” (47). According to her, “*New York Times* bestselling author Nicholas Sparks comes an unforgettable tale of a man who must make the most heart tending decision of his life_ in the name of love”(58). The decision is in fact heart tending in the sense that he becomes penny less after distribution of his property in the name of his beloved Savannah’s husband.

Likewise, Okti Ermawati writes on the research book that, the author Nicholas Sparks wants to extend the message for the audience “...the big heart phenomenon in

John's life" (2). Okti concludes John's personality of never giving up to fixing the situations and his personality with big hearts as the psychological phenomena. He seems everywhere devoted, straight, selfless but indifferent by the situations. John seems more sacrificed and moral to the serials of obstacles. He functions from the point of view of humanitarian psychology but he is unable to do for himself while solving the other's obstacles and needs.

Connecting John's relation with his father, Nisha Amalina Sabrina, concludes in her research that "In order to make communication work, both, father and son have to compromise with each other" (89). In reality, they have to spend time together to understand each. They have to express and listen each to know each other's feelings. John understands his father as a good man but they lack communication. In this way, Nicholas Sparks's combines the love of father-son is into an interesting amalgam of modern ethics.

Ali considers the separation between John and Savannah is due to their superego functions of the protagonists. He comments concerning the sacrifices of Savannah as:

When someone had taken a decision in life, she has to accept the consequences she might get. She should know what will happen when she takes the decision. This also happens to Savannah, when she decided to sacrifice herself for other people, she had to accept the consequences. There are some changes of her habitual after she sacrifices herself for other people. (43)

In fact not only John but Savannah also has to suffer from the heart tending decisions. *Dear John* is a romance of triangular modern love relation, where John has to suffer from burdensome responsibilities in his life due to the communication gap with his

father, beloved and Tim. Likewise, his beloved Savannah is also in trap of responsibility to care for Tim and Alan.

Williams interviewed Sparks as a catholic man and as if his novels consist of morality and spirituality. Sparks tells that being catholic is just about everything. He tells that god is the most important thing in our lives. He supposes that god is true of everybody's lives, whether or not we want to believe it. We can see the use of religious matter in the first page of the novel ". . . she would have suggested that we let nature take its course and allow God to make the decision. She was like that-religious, I mean-and I suppose that was part of the reason I fell for her" (1). The lines are from the prologue of the book, and these lines are showing how the protagonist falls in love. Savannah believes in god for whatever thing happens to their relation.

The novel raises the issues of economic insecurity and imbalance of love which causes due to the communication gap in between the nearest and dearest people. All of the characters meet same fate at the end of the novel. So, the imbalance of ethics appears in the novel through the projection of burdensome duties and responsibilities of the protagonist. The inability to realize the importance of nearest and dearest people in their life is my research's concern, which causes them to face tragedy in life. Taking departure from the point of view of the other researchers and reviewers, the researcher attempts to analyze Nicholas Sparks's *Dear John* as *The Ethics of Memory* and burdensome responsibility.

Numerous humanist philosophers have been trying their best to find out spiritual, social and scientific answer to the question of why man needs a balance in ethics and morality from various ways. Among them, Avishai Margalit's book *The Ethics of Memory* draws on the resources of millennia of western philosophy and religion to provide us with healing ideas that will engage all of us who care about the

nature of our relations to others. In Margalit's account:

[t]his in turn is based on distinction between two types of human relations: thick ones and thin ones. Thick relations are grounded in attributes such as parent, friend, lover, fellow-countryman. Thick relations are anchored in a shared past or moored in shared memory. Thin relations, on the other hand, are backed by the attribute of being human. Thin relations rely also on some aspects of being human, such as being a woman or being sick. Thick relations are in general our relations to the near and dear. Thin relations are in general our relations to the stranger and the remote . . . Ethics, in this way I use the term, tells us how we should regulate our thick relations; morality tells us how we should regulate our thin relations. (7)

Here, he says human relations have two distinctions. Most importantly, he says how to regulate those human relations. To regulate ethics of memory is a complex, that's why many fail establishing the relation of the ethics of memory. Morality is concerned with "respect and humiliation" (8). Morality manifests thin relations. Ethics is about "loyalty and betrayal" (8). This is what Margalit calls humanity, where he says, "Morality is long on geography and short on memory. Ethics is typically short on geography and long on memory" (8). Ethical relations, for him are thick relations and memory is morality. However, that the connection between morality and memory is less clear. Margalit advocates, "The connection between traditionalism and the ethics of memory is straightforward. Traditionalism, by definition, advocates loyalty to the past. It is the business of the ethics of memory to work out what this loyalty consists of in terms of remembering the past" (10-11). Here, Margalit asserts unlike traditionalism the doctrine and the attitude of the ethics of memory must

concern toward future rather than the past. The line John says, “I promise to be a perfect gentleman” (129) suggests John’s goodness concern to future for Savannah that he cannot do any frightening activities, he means here that he cannot have lustful activities. Margalit elucidates, “In any case to remember is to know and to know is to believe. So, the ethics of memory, if there is such a thing, is part of the ethics of belief, if there is such a thing” (14). Margalit asserts thick relations are more “constituent of attitudes”(14) whereas “thin relations are far more on actions than on attitudes, even though attitudes, such as respect and humiliation, should concern thin relations a great deal too”(14-15).

In Margalit’s account, “memory is not a necessary condition for caring and caring is not necessary condition for memory” (30). Caring and memory is distinctive. We can remember people and events we do not care so much. Sometimes we may particularly remember the people we hate or we are not positive in any sense to them. But if we care somebody along with remembering we cannot stop it. In fact, memory combines with morality through caring; both caring and lack of caring both belong quite naturally to morality. We can do care towards to whom we do not know. Here Margalit says:

We usually lack an attentive concern for the well being of most members of the human race. We usually care about our parents, children, spouses, lovers, friends, and by extension about some groups to which we belong. But by no means do we care about everyone. For most of humanity, most people most of time are pretty much indifferent. (32)

We do not care all people of the world as own people. Even if we care to those who cannot return our caring that is the failure. We care others to get something in return

in case of need. Even if we care others as own problem then most of the time we cannot carry on what we supposed to do for own sake.

Some of us really have good heart and benign attitude toward others. Some of us may pay attention not only to our friends' activities but also to our foes where only our friends concern for our well-being. In another hand, we have to develop moral attitude "to overcome our natural indifference to others" (33), as Margalit has explains. Caring is about concerning the others wants and need. It is about enhancing attention, irrespective of their achievements and developments. Margalit says, "Caring, in addition to being a sentiment, is an attitude, in the sense that optimism is an attitude. It is a way of viewing or perceiving as much as a way of doing. It is a selfless attitude" (34-35).

Sometimes we hope someone's selfless care. Caring consist protectiveness. It is the core of thick relations, where memory holds thick relations together. Caring operates through the medium of memory. In this context, memories not only remember in our cognitive level rather in emotional level of memory too. So, we write diaries and memos to self care. Margalit claims that "Psychologically every writer of a private diary has a secret wish, not necessarily an unconscious wish that the diary would one day be read by another person" (158). He further explains that we fear for dying as if we will be forgotten. He asserts if someone remembers us that are the greatest thing in human relations.

Margalit argues that "shared memory can be an expression of nostalgia" (61). It is a significant factor of "communal memory" (61). He further explains that "an essential element of nostalgia is sentimentality. And the trouble with sentimentality in certain situations is that it distorts reality in a particular way that has moral consequences" (62). He means that the nostalgia twists the past and all the people,

events are presented as if they are pure innocence. “Nostalgia can be a vehicle of great tenderness toward the past, but it can also be accompanied by a menacing feeling” (62). But for Margalit’s critics is “strictly confined to sentimentality” (62). Here Margalit means, collective memory is transferred by the heightened expression, where “the amazement and horror” (62) can emphasize more than the reality of the past rather the emotions of the present guides it.

Emotions play very significant role in any kind of relations. For Margalit, two types of emotions are dominant; “better” emotions arouse “love and caring” where as for “worse” “hate and spite” are aroused. “Emotions not only color but also constitute our most important relations to others” (144). In addition to this he says, “We expect parental love not just to color the relation between parents and children but to a constitutive part of those relations” (144).

Margalit has dealt with memory as a moral concern. Generally, the theories of ethics don’t consider memory as a duty. But Margalit claims duties of memory exist. He claims that we have shared memory with those who have thick relations. Margalit worries if we aren’t catch up by ‘thick’ relations, we may have none at all. But if we involve in such relations we do have obligations of memory, which are inevitable. In thick relations, there is no community without memory and the memory is the obligatory factor in making a community. But our moral relationships, known as thin, have no obligations to remember. His central thesis is that memory forms a large part of our relationships. But there are some reasons; however there is a moral duty of remembrance “gross crimes against humanity” (9). Different from this case, the responsibility to remember comes in the context of our “thick” relations. And the notion of caring is the center of “thick” relations.

Now, another theorist of ethics Emmanuel Levinas’s philosophy investigates

ethics in relation to the other as understood as “one God” (xxxiv), in ethical sense. Here, that god would “not be revealed in ethical phenomena, but god is the very no phenomenal force of the other” (xxxiv). And the other as another human being, can be anyone a neighbor, a friend, a stranger on the street, or the dog standing behind you. Thus, the concept of the other, according to Levinas, is an idea inseparable from the responsibility and ethical behavior toward the other. My thesis explores Sparks’s treatment of ethical behavior under extreme circumstances to the protagonist. Sparks’s characters as understood in terms of Levinas’s philosophy as an idea which explores ethics under the ultimate challenges to the behavior of the protagonists.

Emmanuel Levinas’s philosophy is different from other traditional theories on ethics. His theory discloses the relationship to the other rather than talking about the morality. Unlike Margalit, The ethics of Levinas focuses the continuous duty which is obligatory to us for the sake of other and emphasizes the need of others as we are facing as human beings. It is about to be prepared to do that thing which we do not know already about ourselves or about the other. Such type of demand goes far beyond our mere intellectual potential and deep into our bodily experience of otherness. For Levinas, ethics fosters in our relationship to the other. “The sense of alterity itself maintains open every kind of openness even that to distant terms or immediately overcoming elements” (xvi). His argument is about our possibilities to be open toward other without any demands, which would grow ethical relationship along with our own potentialities to be understood. Levinas does not regard of ethics as a matter of differentiating well from evil in acting. For Levinas ethics is a matter of absolute relation to the other. “Not only perceptions but even sensation is seen to be wholly sustained by ethical responsibility” (xvi). For infinitude of human relationships, Levinas calls to adopt an affective, nearly sensual approach. “. . .

[r]esponsibility is the response to the imperative addressed in the concrete act of facing. Responsibility is in fact a relationship with the other, in his very alterity. Then a relationship with alterity as such is constitutive of subjectivity” (xiii).

The ethics of Emmanuel Levinas is an ethics of responsibility. To be ethical is to be responsible for the other. This is the direct responsibility for the other and not only a matter of how we perceive other. When somebody looks at you, you are responsible for him/her. You do not need to take any responsibilities toward him/her: but the cause of his/her look at you is the reason of your responsibility and you can neither ignore nor refuse it: meeting the face is not of the order of pure and simple perception, of the intentionality which goes toward adequate. Positively, we will say that since the other looks at you, you are responsible for him, without even having any responsibilities for him/her. “Responsibility is a form of recognition . . . of other. It is realized as a response to the other facing. This recognition is not a cognitive act that is, an identifying, representing, and re-cognizing act” (xiii). Levinas in the widest sense your responsibility is both without start and endless, it is non-reciprocal. You neither calculate nor expect reciprocity. You carry your responsibility and reciprocity belongs to the other’s responsibility. It is precisely insofar as the relation between the other and you is not reciprocal that you are subjection to the other; and you are “subject” essentially in this sense. He means:

The book concerns with the face to face relationship with alterity, I facing the other as you. The you is eminently singular and singularizing. The entry of the third party is not simply a multiplication of the other; from the first the third party is simultaneously and other than the other and makes me one among others. This alterity is itself first ethical. (xxxv)

Here, the presence of a third party to the relationship one with the other, is for the sake of justice. “Responsibility is enacted not only in offering one’s properties or one’s passions to the other, but in giving one’s own substance for the other”(xiii). The philosophical signification of responsibility is the central theme in the ethics of Emmanuel Levinas and a recurrent motive of broad theoretical elaboration in his writings. Accepting an endless responsibility toward the other is Levinas’s ethics. It is an ethics of responsibility, in particular an endless responsibility of justice.

In Levinas’s sense, to be true to anyone one can say that this is not specified relation to take responsibility but we all have an endless responsibility for all. For example, “what does it mean to truly love another? There was a time in my life when I thought I knew the answer: It meant that I’d care for Savannah more deeply than I cared for myself and that we’d spend the rest of our lives together. It wouldn’t have taken much (1)”. The rhetorical question in the beginning of the novel implies the uncertainty of the attitudes and actions of the protagonist, and uncertainty in between attitudes (ethics) and actions (morality) means the failure, where Margalit’s philosophy asks for the balance of ethics and morality. John says:

There are memories for both of us, of course, but I’ve learned that memories can have a physical, almost living presence, and in this, Savannah and I are different as well. If hers are stars in the nighttime sky, mine are the haunted empty spaces in between. And unlike her, I’ve been burdened by questions I’ve asked myself a thousand times since the last time we were together. Why did I do it? And would I do it again? (2)

The ways they deal with their memories are different now. He compares his memory with haunted empty spaces in between star and the sky, suggests his trouble of being

alienated from his people. When he distributes his father's collection of coins for the treatment of Tim, at that time he is sure to be anonymous. In another hand, he is sure in saying that "You're married to Tim, and your husband needs you. All of you. There's no room for me, and we both know there shouldn't be" (331). Now he questions to own self for what he does. This indicates his memory is in fact a memory of burdens and disloyalties to him. This is how the protagonist of the novel fails to maintain the balance with his thick and thin relation, which is clearly stated here.

John explains, "I'll sit on the hillside overlooking her ranch and wait for her to appear. She won't be able to see me . . . I had to come back to this small North Carolina mountain town to find out what happened" (2). The time he spends to Savannah does not fade out from his memory, and his arrival to see Savannah in the North Carolina Mountain is in fact a sentimental attitude and sentimental attitude for Margalit distorts the reality, when he says "her story and mine are different now. It wasn't easy for me to accept this simple truth" (2). It is because John himself is sure that it is he who ends the relationship. Nicholas Sparks shows father and son conversation as:

Do you remember when we went to Atlanta and you were the one who found that buffalo head nickel we'd been looking for years?" he started. "The one where we had our picture taken? I'll never forget how excited you were. It reminded me of my father and me." I shook my head, all the frustration of life with my dad coming to the surface. "I'm sick and tired of hearing about coins!" I shouted at him. "I never want to hear about them again! You should sell the damn collection and do something else. Anything else." My dad said nothing, but to this day I'll never forget his pained expression. (18)

These above lines imply the relationship of John with his father is not good. The inability to recognize his father and his grandfather's sacrifice for coin collection is his weakness here, unlike his father's passion to follow his grandfather's step he seems opposite to his chip of the old blocks.

His father seems very responsible to his father's passion but John is in the contrary of him. His father seems to care of John even in bad situations of their arguments. But his attitude towards his father made him regretful in the latter phase, when he says:

In the end, I saved only the buffalo head nickel, for I simply couldn't bear to give it up. Aside from the photo, it's all I have left of my dad, and I always carry it with me. It's a talisman of sorts, one that carries with it all my memories of my dad; every now and then, I remove it from my pocket and stare at it. I'll run my fingers over the plastic case that holds the coin, and all at once, I can see my dad reading the Greysheet in his office or smell the bacon as it sizzles in the kitchen. I find that it makes me smile, and for a moment, I feel that I'm no longer alone. (334)

In the above lines, he states that he lives on those memories of his father which seems like memories of respect and humiliation as Margalit has stated. In fact, this is a memory of loyalty to his father. The above lines make it clear that the attitude towards his father changes by the time. At first he is not happy about the way his father collects coins. But at last he find himself grateful to his father's sacrifice to him when he is about to help in Tim's treatment. Now he has respect and loyalty feelings to his father after his death for what his father does for him.

In another hand, John has respect and humiliation both types of feelings for his

sacrifices to Tim's treatment. He has self respect in the sense that he distributes his all money to Tim's treatment and humiliation in the sense that he distributes his money to those people who never cares him as his father does to him. But out of self respect and humiliation he has regretful attitude of being anonymous too. When he states this, it becomes more lucid, "I sold the coins for less than they were worth, and piece by piece, I knew that the remains of my dad's collection would be distributed to people who would never care as much about them as he did" (334). But in the contrary to his father he cares Savannah and her people more than he does to his father.

It is not always true that he does not care his father. He cares his father less than Savannah and Savannah's other people and this is his failure and this make him alienated and frustrated. Instead of fixing the problems of his life he rather celebrates it. The words "He was nearing retirement, and I was struck by the notion that I had no right to keep letting him down after all he'd done for me. So I joined the military" (21) seems ethical. He never realizes that what is going on with his father until Savannah come in his life. He just looks the outside appearance of his father.

Savannah suggests to John about his father might have Asperger's problem. It is because he has "unchanging routines, the fact that he doesn't look at people when he talks to them, his nonexistent social life . . ." (145) and that is the reason she has "bought books about Asperger" (145). In this case he is just tries to avoid about it instead he says, "I didn't ask for your help. I don't want your help. And why is it any of your damn business, anyway?"(144) this is his inability to notice his father's condition. Here his improvident attitude towards his nearest people; father and to savannah shows his inability to handle his emotions, what Margalit says about it is that the hatred emotion is always worse in relations. He goes on asserting that his father does not have that problem but later on when he is cooled he feels regret for his

inability to notice about his father's things.

Savannah says, “[b]ecause if it was me, I’d want to know. And I’m not saying it because I wanted to hurt you or insult your father. I told you because I wanted you to understand him” (145). These lines suggest that John is not interested in it and wants to believe that his father is alright. But Savannah’s words for him are in fact about to care instead of hurting John. There is not any clear-cut diagnosis and no way has she knows for certain but he does not like to understand her Candor too. It shows he is bad in relationships. He is a person who is moody and does according to his mood.

The words “Cursing myself and the entire evening” (147) means he fails morally too. It is due to his inability to control his emotions. John and his father have very monotonous type of relationship. As if they are not happy to be with each. Instead he can have a talk with his father he is more open to Tony, a friend from military. The very common talk between them is “How’d work go?” I asked “The same,” he said. (54) His father is in fact loves his son too much but John does not have the ability to understand it. He is a single parent who raises John. He never thinks to speak more with his father rather he likes to talk about coins.

The words “Well, dig in. I hate to eat alone” (64) means John is showing respect to savannah as well as the importance of other as own self; this is what Emmanuel Levinas states in his book *otherwise than being*. Likewise, the line “Exactly It can be coins or sports or politics or horses or music or faith . . . the saddest people I’ve ever met in life are the ones who don’t care deeply about anything at all”(71) suggests savannah loves chivalry. Once when John retrieves Savannah’s bag from the waves she is influenced by him. That’s why she interests in John and dating him even after she knows that John is a stranger. She likes John’s good heart. But

Savannah is unknown of the fact that John is ignorant about caring his father. John does not interest about his own father's coin collection. When Savannah asks that she interests in his father's coin collection, John hesitates to make meeting of Savannah to his father. In another hand, when Savannah asks "Tell me-would you have jumped for my bag back then?" And John answers "No. I probably would have laughed at what happened" (68). This seems that he is jumps to retrieve bag by no means but in fact he is moral deep inside. He thinks others problem as own as Levinas has suggested. In Levinian sense retrieving bag is John's obligatory when there is no one to do that for the sake of goodness. But outwardly he is not sure about goodness and care to others.

John's responsibility is burdensome in various ways. The burdensome responsibility teaches John about his own potentialities. "One wrong decision and your buddy might die. It's this fact that makes the army work" (24). To preserve the life of others come to the soldiers shoulders' even when there is the danger to own life for the sake of responsibility. Their program is to preserve the guy next to them. They fight for their friends' sake.

Although John knows the fact that Tim and Savannah are very good in their relation since childhood but John does not notice it. This is savannah that prefers John much better than Tim and this is the fact they grow their relation. In case of John's absence Savannah and Tim's relation can grow. "We went to the same schools and attended the same church for years, and then we were at the same university. She's kind of like my little sister. She's special" (46). The words "she is Special" suggests Tim is very fond of Savannah. At this moment John understands Tim's real feelings for Savannah. This is the ethical relationship of Tim and Savannah. Tim and John become good friends only through Savannah but both of them acts as if they are not certain about their feeling to Savannah. In one hand Tim loves and sacrifices

Savannah unconditionally since his childhood, but he is inexpressible, in another hand John and Savannah relationship is growing.

When Savannah says John that she wants to meet his father because his father is the only one who raises him but he does not like the idea and he feels depression to make them meet. This is what he thinks:

I wasn't all that happy about going, but the way she asked made it impossible for me to say no . . . Nor did I understand why she wanted to see my dad tonight, unless it meant she wasn't quite as thrilled as I was at the prospect of being alone. To be honest, the thought depressed me. (107)

These words suggest that he is not happy with his father the way his father is. He cannot say no it is because he loves Savannah too much. In another hand she just wants to see his father in the sense that she wants to grow ethical relationship with his father. The conversation goes like this, "I didn't want to fall in love with anyone, she said . . . you'll be leaving in just a few days and all this will be over . . . and I'll be a mess again. It doesn't have to be over, I protested. But it will be, she said" (139). Savannah knows that responsibility is a difficult thing. Distance can be harmful for close relation and also about love and cure. Savannah is practical and John wants to avoid the fact and he is more imaginary.

The words "I love you, John Tyree, and I'm going to hold you to the promise you once made to me. If you come back, I'll marry you. If you break your promise, you'll break my heart" (171) suggests Savannah has predetermination in her attitude. If John fails his promise she cannot be with him. This suggests unethical in the sense that there is lack of faith in this relationship and relation depends on the condition of John's arrival in time. Already this is not good relation and when there is a condition

in relation that becomes thin relation instead of thick relation as Margalit suggests. In fact, Savannah's words show loyalty, which is a good relationship sign. This is the failure of the protagonists in the sense that he cannot maintain the duties with his relation with Savannah. John becomes optional to Savannah even when there is no one for him except Savannah. In other words Savannah seems unfaithful to John's love and unknown about military duty and responsibility.

The line "We were all simply Americans" (217) suggests that all the people of the United States are united for the sake of country. There is the strong sense of patriotism. Patriotism for Margalit is ethical and it is thick relation. John says "The images of September 11 will be with me forever" (217) here this line of John implies that he is too much nationalistic and for the sake of nation he later on devotes to army service even leaving his father's notorious condition of health and Savannah's uncertainty for him. To do for the sake of nation is his responsibility, which turns to be burdensome in front of his people. It becomes clear from the following lines:

Granted, I was caught up in the same patriotic wave, but more than that, I was bound by the twin ties of friendship and responsibility. I knew my men, I cared about my men, and the thought of abandoning them at a time like this struck me as impossibly cowardly. We'd been through too much together for me to even contemplate leaving the service in those waning days of 2001. (218)

In another hand he is not as responsible as his father when he says "My dad was uninterested in their value" (220). Bill Tyree collects coin just for the sake of John's grandfather interest not for financial gain or else. But John is thinking in another way as to sell them. This thinking is against his father and his grandfather. This seems unethical in Margalit's sense of ethics that he devaluates his son John's interest.

It is more evident as he puts “Fewer tears had been shed because the intensity of the feeling between us had waned” (222). Due to the lack of proper communication in relation and Savannah’s duty of teaching and taking classes they have a dispute as if both of them are in reality are not happy due to their duty of different kinds. In fact they do not like to show their egoistic attitude but they fails ethically. They do according to Levinas’s thought of obligatory responsibility. This is the major drawback in their relation. It becomes clearer from the following lines:

Sometimes I would call two or three more times in the next hour, growing angrier with every ring that went unanswered. When she would finally answer, I could have asked her where she’d been, but I never did . . . Too often our conversations were less a joyous exchange of affection than a rudimentary exchange of information. (224)

John is unknown of the fact that there is a triangular love relation. He does not even think about Tim’s interference in their love. He has faith in Tim’s non-interference in his love relation with Savannah. This is his misleading assumption. Moreover, the communication gap even in the time of separation plays the pivotal role. He even does not like to ask with his beloved for the reason of her unanswered phone.

The excuses make by Savannah depict failure in their relationships. It becomes more evidential from the following lines:

. . . I don’t want to do that, even though I know you will feel betrayed. I’ll understand if you never want to talk to me again, just as I’ll understand if you tell me that you hate me. Part of me hates me, too. Writing this letter forces me to acknowledge that, and when I look in the mirror, I know I’m looking at someone who isn’t sure she deserves to be loved at all. I mean that. (231)

Instead of ethics, morality guides here. Likewise, humiliation guides, instead of love and faith hatred and sadness in relation come to prove. For Margalit, Morality guides thin relations. Thick relations are based on loyalty and betrayal. John and Savannah relation is based on thick relation. Savannah betrays John in one sense and in another John fails to maintain geographically distance relation with Savannah.

Savannah too fails it is because she is not with John to whom she loves rather she marries to Tim and Tim wins because he is good at maintaining relations by ethically but not morally. Not morally in the sense that he knows the relationship between John and Savannah. Many times he supports their relation in the past. But he becomes selfish to get Savannah. There is a time when he is unable to say about his love to Savannah but now he becomes disloyal even he knows John's unselfish love. But John remains unnoticed about Tim's place for Savannah. The following lines prove that:

I was incredibly angry then; more than feeling betrayed, I felt as if she'd crushed everything that had any meaning in the world. I hated her, and I hated the nameless, faceless man who'd stolen her from me.

I fantasized what I would do to him if he ever crossed my path, and the picture wasn't pretty. (235)

He becomes angry here as if he is not responsible for whatever happens in their relationship. In fact, their difficult relations and difficult duties of life cause their separation. Their duties cause their separation. Here communication gap plays vital role. In another hand John's relation with his father is also not good; there is also vast communication gap in between. It becomes evidential from the following lines:

We didn't talk about much else, but then, we didn't really need to. He had no desire to talk about Iraq, and I had no desire to talk about it,

either. Neither of us had a social life to speak of- Iraq hadn't been conducive to that-and my dad . . . well, he was my dad, and I didn't even bother asking. (240)

This also shows the lack of caring to each and indifferent attitude to each. When there is lack of care in the ethical relations that is not good in terms of Margalit's *ethics of memory*.

After John's visit to Savannah and Tim in the hospital, he murmurs alone on the way, by saying:

My wallet held a single fading snapshot of a woman I'd loved and lost. I heard soldiers talking of their hopes for the future, while I was making no plans at all. Sometimes I wondered what my men thought of my life, for there were times I caught them staring at me curiously. I never told them about my past or shared personal information. They knew nothing of Savannah or my dad or my friendship with Tony. Those memories were mine and mine alone, for I'd learned that some things are best kept secret. (242)

The above lines indicate the failure attitudes of John, which are in fact his inability to maintain good relationship with Savannah. He alienates himself from every relation. To whom he believes and loves also betrays him just because of his obligatory duty of military. The memories are bitter that's why he is a failure. Here is another example of his bitter memory. This is for his father. He says "I began to torment myself with the memories of all those years I'd wasted blaming him. I remembered my last two visits home, and I ached at the thought that we would never share those simple times again" (245). Now he realizes that his father is a lot to him. He never realizes what his father does for him before father is alive.

Similarly, his words “I know how ridiculous it sounded” (292) suggest that his visit to Tim is not worthy and ethical to visit, when he knows the fact about him and Savannah. It seems ridiculous for John because Tim is a winner and who vanquishes John. John has money but he has no ethical relations remain as Margalit asserts. But the recollections of his father and beloved remain with him.

Tragedy befalls when Savannah says, “I don’t even know why I’m telling you this. I mean, I can’t guarantee that any of those other places can even help him” (303). These words are of Savannah’s and she asks to John as if he can help in Tim’s treatment. The responsibility seems burdensome for both. In that sense they both are the failure. Savannah maintains money for Tim’s treatment, who is now her husband. In another hand John is the one who gets betrayal from Savannah and Tim. Although her betrayal to John is not her want it is her sentimental attitude for Tim’s sake. This seems unethical in the sense that she promises John. In another hand John is obligatory to help for Tim’s treatment. He helps Tim because Savannah is Tim’s wife. He is a failure because of unprecedented responsibility is in his head. For that neither he can escape from it nor he becomes happy by leaving Savannah in such a situation. In addition the line also proves his failure “. . . the woman I’d once fallen in love with, the woman I still loved but could never have” (311).

It becomes more clear when he says, “Her comment bothered me, but I wasn’t about to follow her” (312). Here John is right in the sense things changes between them, and there is no way they can be what they used to be once.

John is totally a failure personality in terms of his ethical relations. The words of Tim when he remembers he has only sorry feelings. Tim says, “That whole first year you were gone, she missed you so much. It was like her heart was breaking a little bit every single day . . .” He didn’t finish. “You always knew I was in love with

her, too, didn't you?"(326) Nicholas Sparks has put these lines to show that *Dear John* is a tragedy of the protagonists, in addition the tragedy occurs when John is unable to maintain his ethical and moral duties.

John alienates himself from all. He now has nothing except of bittersweet memories of his relationship with people. He neither can forget that nor becomes happy by recollecting his past. It becomes evident as he puts, "I sat on the bench out front, wondering why I'd come and wishing that I hadn't. I replayed my conversation with Tim over and over, and the image of his anguish made me close my eyes. For the first time in years, my love for Savannah felt somehow . . . wrong" (327-328). John feels it because love should bring joy, it should grant a person peace, but it is bringing only pain and regret. He says "I hadn't come to tempt Savannah or ruin her marriage." (328).The way he meets to Savannah is somehow unethical too. It is because Savannah is now Tim's wife. The relation with savannah for him is over. His ethics is questionable here. If that is not good for John and Savannah why they meet and talk in the ethical ground and proves unethical? It is because John and Savannah are not responsible for each after Savannah's marriage to Tim.

Their ethical responsibilities are different now. Now this is her responsibility to do for Tim instead of John as being a wife of Tim to do for him and John becomes responsible for Tim because Tim is Savannah's husband, which seems burdensome to John. This further clarifies by his words:

It didn't guarantee that he would live to an old age, but it did guarantee him a fighting chance, and that's all I wanted for both of them. I wanted them to be happy. I wanted her to be happy. And from what I had witnessed today, they were. I'd come because I needed to know that I'd made the right choice in selling the coins for Tim's treatment,

that I'd done the right thing in never contacting her again, and from where I sat, I knew that I had.(336)

John is burdensome here. In Levinas's sense, John becomes ethical in the sense he has no demands from them rather he distributes his father's coin collection to them whomever care him as his father does. He now understands his potentialities to serve other without expecting anything. In fact he understood his father's sacrifice to him. It means John becomes responsible for what his father does to him, and what Savannah does to him and this is otherwise than being, here, his moral obligations are counterproductive for him and Savannah is the result of John's moral obligation to Tim. In another hand John is a failure because he does not maintain the ethical and moral relations because he could not do for his father and sacrifices own Savannah to Tim due to his failure in maintaining relation with her.

John shows the goodness and honesty at those places where he can never get care as much he does to them which causes him to suffer. Duties of John are self made and duty becomes an enough reason for him to live in nostalgia. He is dutiful even when he has mental agony, mood disorder in general. He sells his father's coin for Tim's treatment even after knows that he will not get anything in return as his father does to him. He faces meaningless tragedy but he motivates himself for his duty most of the times. He regrets for what he does with his people. Same is the case to Savannah as well; when she is unable to recognize her lover's sacrifice to her and she marries to Tim that results her to suffer and results responsibility to care Tim.

At first sight it seems betray in love and faith but in fact it is the characters inability to recognize relationship ethics, which resulted failure. John's father has just tried to follow his father's footstep of coin collecting, so he remains in a trap in the sense he does not like to think about other moral relations. His collections of coins for

his father's sake he lost his communication gap with his son. But he is also unsuccessful in his relation with his son when there is a vast communication gap between father and son. It is because John is rebellious and does not like to understand his father. That's why John too remains alone in his everyday walks of life when he has no good relation with his single parent. John does not like to give any attention to his early teenage days but when he realizes about his father later on in his life it is too late.

He believes whole heartedly to his girlfriend, Savannah that she will marry him. But when he knows Savannah betrays him and marries to Tim he just understands what wrong he does with his beloved. When he realizes his mistakes in life he is late to recover the situations. After the death of his father he realizes his father's sacrifices to him. He is not good in his ethical relation that is with his father and his beloved Savannah. He is good only at his duties of military service for the sake of nation, which is insufficient for perfect ethical relations. Unlike him, Tim cannot do his responsibility towards his love and family. Tim too tries to keep balance between both ethical and moral relations. Although he tries his responsibility for both types of relation are deceitful. Tim is, in fact becomes unable to keep good moral relation with John, when he marries Savannah, it is his betrayal. John fails in every relation. All the tragic incidents in the novel are presents through the nostalgic tone of the protagonist John. Neither John nor his father establishes good relation to self and to the others.

In addition, John is a failure in the sense that he loses his father's finance for the sake of morality. This is the responsibility of burdens for him. Modern era is the era of money, fame and dignity but John fails to maintain these things when he likes to become anonymous to Tim and Savannah for his donation for Tim's treatment. At

the end he finds himself in the situation of nothingness except of his bittersweet memories of his people of the past. Likewise, Savannah too, is a failure. She neither can await John nor can avoid Tim. The reason of her loneliness is, in fact John. Savannah's choice of Tim is the result of John's long distance love relation. This is a kind of moral obligation when Tim already loves Savannah. In another hand, she now realizes who her true love is. In this sense she too is a failure. This is the reason of frustration in her life. That's why one is responsible for another's success and failure.

In this way Nicholas Sparks presents the tragedy of those characters that are unable to recognize the ethical and moral relations. Ethics of memory comes as the main concern of this research whereas Levinas's sense of responsibility also comes as a subsidiary rule of interpretation. Hence, the ethics has the significant role for the success and the failure of Sparks's characters. The issues raises by the novel are; disloyalties, betrayal, lose of self, imbalance of ethics of memory, burdensome responsibility of morality where unsuccessful love has remains as a memory.

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