

The Portrayal Of Women In Manju Kapur's Custody

R. Subathra^{1*}, Dr. D. Dhanalakshmi²

¹*Ph.D, Research Scholar (Part - Time) P.G. & Research Department of English Periyar E.V.R. College (Autonomous) Tiruchirapalli – 23, Email: subathravairamoorthy@gmail.com*

²*Associate Professor & Research Advisor P.G & Research Department of English Periyar E.V.R. College (Autonomous) Tiruchirapalli - 23*

Abstract

Custody novel depicts role of women in household Indian society and their objective for liberty and it echo into the fight of women and explores with a view to discover and support woman's struggle for independence in the patriarchal world. Manju Kapur is putting the issues like female freedom, their physical objective and their efforts in relocating themselves in the present communal circumferences in her novel. The novel is completely made around the woman's pursuit for self identity, self fulfillment and self recognition. Manju Kapur searches the complexity in the family life of middle class people Indian women with their aspiration and needs for a life exterior. His ardent and hard work was dedicated in his poem and novels with an interest to emancipate and empower women's career and life, from his viewpoint he advocated and addressed huge and lot for create an awareness at several women's heart. Their life has been modernized and motivated by his thoughtful literature making.

Keywords: Portrayal Of Women, Manju Kapur's Novels, Custody Novel, Women In Indian

Introduction

Custody, Manju Kapur's fifth novel, depicts the life of urban town where citizens have sustained injuries due to modernity. It is multiplied and perpetuated by an impact of globalization and economic liberalization process. Manju Kapur's novel Custody is put in late 20th century India's history and centre around broken marriages system, remarriages and the custody of children growth. Manju Kapur reveals the variation and modernity which are foremost in our civilization. She conveys the hollowness of contemporary life settings.

The story

The story covers a period of 12 years in the lives of main characters Shagun and Raman. The happily married couple—Raman, an IIT, IIM graduate and marketing executive of the Brand, a global drinks company, and Shagun, the extraordinary beautiful woman with emerald eyes, have two delightful children—Arjun and Roohi. While Roohi is a carbon copy of her ordinary looking father, Arjun takes after his beautiful mother. Shagun is initially happy with her marriage begins to feel bored and lonely due to Raman's long absence from home on professional tours and trips. Despite Shagun's wedding has been arranged one, she does not have relaxed feelings. Shagun's brave character motivates her to choose pleasure lifestyle in order to search out her own place

in this social settings, without annoying anybody. She is a liberated modern woman. She would like to live for her own interest. Though she is urban middle-class woman; she is caring of comfortable life. She gets uninterested with her every day custom usual living and is fascinated by the contemporary life styles. Raman and Shagun have dissimilar interests among themselves concerning the occupancy of their kids and her method of living as contemporary Indian woman penetrating for their freedom.

In the novel, Manju Kapur tells us the story of an unsatisfied marriage between Shagun and Raman. In the beginning, anyone who is expecting a happy ending for such couple but ultimately this marriage proves as a failure. Raman's long distance tours and business trips quickly escalate estranged relationship between them. However due to this situation, Shagun chooses to remain away from her husband. It shows that how the couple, devoid of sensible vision, not only fail to attain happy life but also create new problems. Moreover, the children of this couple often turn out to be victims of their experiments with their life. Shagun accepts free spirit life and freedom. In doing so, she risks her martial life. What comes out predominantly in the novel is Raman's agony and annoyance at the disloyalty, he encounters at the hands of his sophisticated companion. Manju Kapur presents him to us with sympathy and scrupulous consideration headed for detail.

Manju Kapur Interview

Manju Kapur articulates in his interview in *Random Reads* (2011) 'instead of showing attention on the divorce case, unfaithfulness etc., I do appear at the penalty of these events, which I find more fascinating. Not what reveals a separation of couples (Divorce), but what the long phrase penalty of this are for everyone being attentive'?

Manju Kapur mention the story in her meeting with James Kidd (2011) and it is in *The autonomous*: 'The family is where I see the impact of what is occurring in Indian social system. In my previous story, it was women who conversed this family oriented relationship. Here, it is everyone the children, the father, the wives. If you settle free and comfortable, you pay the touching price'.

Television serials in different Indian languages

Manju Kapur narrative *Custody* has been basic source of every day soap operas on a number of Indian entertainment television channels in diverse vernaculars:

- ❖ *Ye Hai Mohabbatein* on Star Plus in Hindi under Ekta Kapoor's production house Balaji Telefilms.
- ❖ *Kalyanam Mudhal kadhal Varai* on Star Vijay in Tamil.
- ❖ *Avanu Mahte Sharvani* on ASianet Suvatna in Kannada.
- ❖ *Manasupalik Mouna Geetham* on Maa in Telgu.
- ❖ *Mon Nilye Kachakachi* on Star Jalsa in Bengali.

Negative attitude towards women in Indian society

Manju Kapur handles familial prototype to speak to better subject which are disturbing society in whole aspects. She illustrates crystallization aspects that Shagun's hard clash for detention is not distinctive. The novel also express Ishita's fight to highlight the common unenthusiastic approach pertaining to unproductive women in Indian social setting.

Radical Feminism in Manju Kapur's Custody

Radical Feminism is an ideology which accentuates the patriarchal roots of disparity between men and women, or in particular the social supremacy of women by men. It ponders patriarchy as separating

societal rights, liberations, license and power chiefly along the lines of sex, and as a consequence, suppressing women and upholding men. It voices for a considerable change to the structure of contemporary society and it doesn't have a single or unified theoretical or political doctrine, nevertheless it does take a persistent stance regarding men.

Radical feminists recognize patriarchy or male supremacy as the prime and unanimous cause of women's subjugation via its restriction of women's reproductive capacity, sexuality and the philosophy of femininity. They dissent against the prevailing political and social organization in common because it is integrally tied to male supremacy. Further they incline to be cynical of political action within the existing system and instead give attention on culture change that destabilize male supremacy and related hierarchal structures. Some eminent radical feminists are Mary Daly, Andrea Dworkin, Kate Millet and Juliet Mitchel etc.

The beginning of Indian Writing in English by women writers can hunt down to the last part of the nineteenth century. This advent is a significant breakthrough for feminism in India. Indian women came to know the Western culture, ideas, philosophy, literature and movements that were alluring and fascinating. They got a chance to exhibit their Indianness in the newly developed English language. Indian Writers of English have also come out of their cocoons and began to raise voice for the voiceless in their society. In particular feminists attempt to solve the issues of marginalized women. India has shifted from glorious past to degeneration, from spiritual dominance to communal clashes, from imprisonment to liberation etc.

As a post-colonial writer, Manju Kapur considerably subsidized to the evolution of Indian Fiction. Instinctively she senses the position of women in the male dominated society and outlines the crisis of women. Her works not only portray women's hitches but also the social disputes such as freedom movement and partition etc. Her writings, highlights the problems of patriarchy, inter-religious marriage and family bond, and male-female bond, co-existence of past and present. She has narrated her women protagonist as a victim of biology, gender, domestic violence, and circumstances. Further her novels delineate the themes like gender bias, man-woman relationship, human desire, revolt and protest. Some of her eminent works are *Difficult Daughters*, *A Married Woman*, *Home*, *The Immigrant and Custody*.

All the female characters of Manju Kapur are viewed as women striving against all odds. The

intensity of feminism are obvious in her writing. This is clearly seen in the struggle of her woman characters, their vulnerability and quest for identity, attitude of liberation, the female psyche and the female biological world. Manju Kapur is regarded as a modern feminist. Her fascinating fifth novel *Custody* (2011) was marked as her enormous achievement. Many critics regard this novel as a feministic novel, however it covers all those facets of married and family life in Indian society which are correspondingly distressing as well as calming for everyone. Further this novel is not only curbed to man-woman relationship or the subjugation of feminine but also it delineates with the life of children of a broken family. The institution of marriage and the hollowness of modern matrimony is portrayed dolefully in this novel.

Manju Kapur's novels are like renewed pages depicting the winds of amendment and her protagonists are convincing representations for change. In her novel *Custody* she highlights the two significant aspects of feminist outlooks i.e. infidelity and infertility by means of her two female protagonists, Shagun and Ishita accordingly. In addition this novel is also the story of custody of children after departure and the Indian legal system. Kapur elicits the lives of wealthy, urban, middle class Indians with their unsettling secrets, dysfunctional relationships, their hankering for liberation and serenity. She tries to draw out substantial novel meanings in the changed facts of cultural conditions in which marital roles, dual concerns and equal opportunities and restrictions of society are viewed from the perspective of feminism.

In *Custody* Kapur portrays the two distinguished facets of the female counterpart, infidelity and infertility. Infidelity emboldens a woman; on the other hand infertility forbids her. Kapur tries to depict the plights, depressions, alienation and agony of modern women in the quest of self-contentment through the characters of Shagun and Ishita. She reconnoiters the extramarital relationship and employs this sexual liberation as a tool of confrontation to thwart patriarchal values and myths. Further this novel emphasizes the evolution of individual tendency in modern life. Everyone seeks their own happiness without considering the social norms and ethics.

The novel begins with the story of Shagun and Raman, their marriage has happened based on the tradition when her age was not even twenty two. Soon afterwards she gave birth to a baby boy

namely Arjun. Everything was going on in a peaceful manner, when her son is almost eight years old she gives birth to a baby girl namely Roohi for which she was not mentally prepared. As the time progresses, Raman is busy with his works and not giving importance to Shagun and his kids. Due to this there were lack of communication and lot of misunderstandings between them. She becomes dejected of her life. She wants to be the role model of her family but after marriage her life was totally changed. She gets tired of looking after her kids and family alone. "After marriage there had been a child. Then the claims of husband, family and friends made a career hard to justify, especially since money was not an issue." (*Custody* 11)

Her life immediately changed after the arrival of Ashok Khanna. She falls in love with him. Kapur portrays her as an independent woman, she wants to enjoy her life with self-fulfillment. She voiced against the male supremacy and patriarchal mechanism and subjugation of women in the name of marriage, culture and tradition. Disloyalty of Shagun towards Raman discloses the infidelity and vainness of a modern marriage where one's self is more significant than anything else. Despite Shagun has a lot of abilities in herself to form her career, to live a dynamic life but she is trapped in the institution of marriage and the system of patriarchy. Regardless of all these things, this affair provides her sense of delightful experience and imparts her to be self-reliant, confident, powerful, independent and resourceful as she pursues sexuality, equality and independence.

Another protagonist is Ishita who performs as difference to Shagun and through whom Kapur examines the problem of infertility in women. In the Indian society, Infertility is regarded as a curse and Ishita becomes a prey of this and lost her life. She is the only child of her parents Mr. and Mrs. Rajora. As a traditional Indian parents, Mr. and Mrs. Rajora get her married as soon as they find a suitable proposal. After two years of marriage, it was clear that Ishita had some issues in pregnancy and her in-laws treated her responsible for this consequently Ishita experiences mental anguishes. Kapur by means of Ishita's life reveals the hollowness of marital life where a woman is defamed due to her infertility and the truth that she can't elevate her family name to the next level. As there is no one to take care of her or support her, she was suppressed to intense mental tortures and anguish. Even her mother-in-law failed to understand the plight of Ishita and to empathize her.

Motherhood is seen as a system of patriarchy that ensures the suppression of women by their custody in married life. Kapur portrays how an infertile woman endures negative, individual experiences regarding her infertility. Ishita undergoes a lack of identity and feels that she is not fulfilling her role as a woman. Her mother-in-law does not want to waste more money on her and she contemplates painfully: "Had there been something wrong with Suryakant, they would have moved heaven and earth to get a son's defect corrected. In an ideal world the same resources would have been put at the disposal of a daughter in law. But this was not an ideal world" (Custody 68).

In recent times, the issue of female sexuality has provoked intense disputes and arguments in academic circles. The current writers grasp that if the women want to be empowered and liberated they have to coup conventional patriarchal system, culture and involve themselves in arguments and conflict between sex morality of supremacy (patriarchy) and female sexuality. It is not in its restriction and suppression but in privilege and assertion that the new sexual ideology is structured.

Thus entire article vividly pictures the views of radical feminism through the characters of Shagun and Ishita. Though Shagun's decision is violated against the existing Indian conventions, she feels happy and contented as an Independent woman. Both characters are aiming at rediscovering themselves in the society and they want to liberate themselves from the clutches of patriarchy. As a radical feminist, Kapur tries to voice against the system of intense patriarchy through Shagun and Ishita. Divorce is not a barrier for woman to prove herself in the society. It was clearly depicted through Ishita. In the light of radical feminism, this article is a critique of motherhood, marriage, the nuclear family and sexuality, examining how much our culture is built on patriarchal norms.

The entire novel discusses the issues of freedom and identity in terms of the relationship between man and woman. She firmly disagrees the conventional social milieu that obstructs the liberation of women and intensifies women's subordination. Kapur outlines exactly an Indian attitude that recognizes woman only through her role as a wife. Efficiently, she reveals the reality that in the patriarchal society woman gets love and respect because of her body and if the body fails to perform the traditionally expected role, her marriage may be damaged. In such society marriage is the subjugation of the female in the interest of the continuation of her husband's

bloodline and woman is considered as a reproductive machine having no individuality. When Ishita fails to perform the established gender role, she gets rejection. Kapur projects emergence of new woman by means of her protagonists Shagun and Ishita, Shagun who dare to cross the threshold of husband's home revealed as a modern woman and Ishita who rise after her broken marriage emerge as a strong and independent woman in Custody.

Indian Women Novelists

A graphic depiction of this transformation of the Indian woman has been very successfully done by the various Indian women novelists such as Githa Hariharan, Shashi Deshpande, Kamala Markandeya, Ruth P. Jhambhala, Anita Desai, and Nayantara Saghil. Bharati Mukherjee, Gauri Deshpande, Shobha De, Arundhati Roy, Jhumpa Lahiri, Arundhati Roy, Meena Alexander and Manju Kapur. They have tried with sincerity and honesty to trace the growth of the Indian woman on the one hand and dealt with the physical, psychological and emotional stress syndrome of women on the other hand. Today fiction by women writers contributes a major segment of the contemporary Indian writing in English. Women writings have contributed much to the growth of Indian English literature and have highlighted issues pertaining to women. The women writers are highly acclaimed and have won international recognition. Indian women's fiction deals with multiple issues concerning the self and society. Much of the women's writing is primarily a criticism of social justice and equality in a patriarchal society. The world is being seen in a new dimension through the eyes of women fiction writers. The problems and issues faced by the women in today's male dominated world are some of the aspects presented with a deep insight.

Position of women in the works of Manju Kapur

Manju Kapur's first novel *Difficult Daughters* (1998) is composed against the foundation of India's parcel. The tale is the account of Virmati seen through the eyes of her little girl Ida, the storyteller and a divorced person, from whom her mom's past has dependably been stayed quiet. Virmati's desire for instruction had hints of her having an autonomous wish. She needed to have her won space, her own character. Virmati, who winds up in a bind in view of her exhausting family obligations and the craving to think about, is made up for lost time in the snare of an unlawful

undertaking which from one perspective, satisfies her scholarly thirst while on the other, traps her into a whirlpool of miseries. It is her inclination to set up herself as a person that captures her in the terrible methods for this world. Virmati battles and sets up her will to have advanced education. She doesn't have faith in organized marriage especially early marriage which she feels is huge obstacle to instruction, in this way she gets ready to remove the framework and what might be its results.

She is misled by conditions. However, she thinks about her enduring as destiny. Virmati's wants to change her destiny from being a simple spouse and mother in a customary family, yet her adoration with the Professor makes her select the demonstration of coming back to a relationship that has just brought her only untold misery. Virmati's anguish portrays her as a sincerely starved being. The Professor's affection fulfils her passionate needs and it makes her rebel against her proposition to be engaged, with the goal that she could concentrate further on her education.

Manju Kapur expounds on hopeless predicament of ladies sufferings under their harsh and rude spouses. So man-lady relationship brings characters into estrangement, withdrawal, androgynous issue, forlornness and absence of correspondence that often happens in her books. Kapur's A Married Woman depicts the pressure between a delicate spouse Astha and the normal husband Hemant. It stresses the triumph of life over confusion and of workmanship over life.

Manju Kapur frankly comments on Indian legal system

The pattern and structure of India's legal system is meant in the following connotations. Justice delayed was justice denied is proved truth in Indian administration experienced and enjoyed every day by lot of litigants all through the country. Divorce is given to uninterested couples by the court on cordial and mutual consent of both. Now day's couples are getting divorce freely without any problems and constraint. Six months later they would be provided divorce after undergoing and verifying whole verifications according Indian penal code procedures. In the case of Shagun and Raman, they will have to surrender all ownership rights of their joint property, all claims to preservation, the legal responsibility of the children, only challenging would be managed skillfully.

Modern Women

In olden period, women people withered lot with lot of suffering. They accustomed and adjusted flexibly everything for the marriage purpose. They do not have stamina to access for divorce matter and separation issues. They perplexed with sorrows and worries and they conducted the uninterested life. Nowadays, women are having plausible ideas as to how to live? Their different opinions are explained by them and they move to attain their own objective and goals. Shagun and Ishita are two modern gallantry women, having sustained their life positively by their own choice and never worried about the society's development. Based on their interest got the divorce to life congenially and cordially according to their wish in this social system. Manju Kapur explained detail the characters of Shagun and Ishita with sorrows look and sufferings feelings. They put their effort with diligent to lead their life with happiness. Most of the working women face a lot of problems in their family and mostly they are created by their spouse.

The New Dimension

The world has been understood in different perspectives through Manju Kapur's eyes and thoughts fiction. His marvelous and creative writings of novel, poets and narratives have been contributed more to make this society in an elegant ways with an interest to motivate novels writer. All female protagonists of her novels are self reliant. A very striking feature of almost all her female people are known as protagonist is meant that they have studied highest education with an aim of making superiority status in their life. The very feature that differentiates Manju Kapur's female protagonists is their attitude towards tradition and modernity Manju Kapoor work has been differentiated and distinguished due he has paid colossal attention on his work toward empowering women's social problems. Manju. His work has been famous toward uplifting and empowering their life freely. They face troubles trials and harms. They are having bundle of self confidence and motivation. All the depiction of female's pictures and works as protagonists is correlated with each other's work to see differences quoted by his marvelous work.

Manju Kapur's Social Criticism

Women have sought an appropriate place in the modern society after facing challenges caused by traditional set up of the society.

- ✓ The novelist aims to portray women who prove unsuccessful due to lack of understanding between man and woman.
- ✓ Middle class women who try to get education are portrayed in Manju Kapur's novels.
- ✓ The patriarchal society and its effect on home are insulating Manju Kapur to draw women who are having boldness and making their sincere efforts to establish themselves independent economically and emotionally in the society.
- ✓ The novelist has portrayed women who break the dichotomy of marriage as considered a social intuition for the sake of their freedom and self-satisfaction.
- ✓ Women are portrayed by raising issues like divorce, infertility and relationship between parents and child.

Conclusion

The Custody novel is all about the sufferings, aspiration, childlessness, disloyalty, individuality, new woman. Extra marital affair breaks a solid marriage, Indian law and tangled live, In-laws in India treat a woman who cannot conceive, redefines the changing parenting scenario in middle class Indian homes are main factor of the novel. So, the novel has been studied by applying a tool of social criticism. Her narratives reveals that women are being protagonist with their own plan and cognition, they would like to sustain individuality and freedom life system, making decision in their life to solve all their problems are being their major agenda and answers worrying to attain all their innate needs and necessities such as freedom of love, affection, caste identity, sterility as a annoyance, divorce problems, extra and illegal couples marriage affair in search of love, affections and inexpensive freedom etc. The broadened vision of women's in their narratives is a most important of this social system.

Reference

- [1]. <http://www.languageinindia.com/feb2016/jeyasudhadifficultdaughters.pdf>
- [2]. <http://dnaindia.com/repot.asp?NewsID=1019404>.
- [3]. <http://jaiarjun.blogspot.com/2008/08/meeting-with-manju-kapur.html> August2008.
- [4]. <http://petalsfromtheheart.blogspot.com/2012/08/a-book-review-custody-by-manju-kapur.html?m=1>
- [5]. <http://www.financialexpress.com/fe/daily/2000531/fle28063.html>.

- [6]. <http://www.hindunnet.com/thehindu/may/2003/01/05/stories/200301050039300>.
- [7]. <http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/beloved/summary.html> 4. www.openup.co.uk.
- [8]. <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2011/feb/27/custody-manjukapur-review>
- [9]. [https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manju-Kapur\(biography\)](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manju-Kapur(biography))
- [10]. Kapur, manju (2011), Custody, New Delhi, *Random House*, India.
- [11]. Kidd, James (2011), Manju Kapur: Pride and Prejudices, *The Independent*.
- [12]. Random Reads (2011), An Interview, *Random House*, India.
- [13]. Sharma, Ram (2013), Representation of man in the novels of manju kapur, rise of new woman novels of manju kapur, *Mangalam Publication*, pp.165.
- [14]. www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/features/manju-kapur-pride-and-prejudices-2240299
- [15]. www.randomhouseindia.com