

## **The Disruption Of Family In Manju Kapur's *Custody***

**K.P.Bhavatharini**

PhD Scholar, PG and Research Dept of English,  
V.O.Chidambaram College, Thoothukudi.

**Dr. Anita Albert**

Assistant Professor, PG and Research Dept of English,  
V.O.Chidambaram College, Thoothukudi.

(affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University)

Manju Kapur exposes the disparity and how modernity plays a major role in our society and also the hollowness modern life through her novel *Custody*. The present paper deals with the key aspects of custody, like extra marital affair, exploration of children and the law system of India. Manju Kapur has published five novels and all her novels dealt with postmodern era, which became sensational in the literary world. She talks about the life of people in Metropolitan cities and how it changes the attitude of theirs and makes them to be victims of modernity through her novel *Custody*. She manages to disclose the atmosphere which revolves around the family and how it destroys their peace. Here the author portrays how her female protagonist goes to an extent to fulfill her need even breaking her marital relationship with her husband and lack of concern with her children. She portrays the unimaginable incident of broken marriage and illustrates how it causes their children to yearning for their custody from their parents. The children are mentally affected because of the conflict between their egoistic parents to take back their custody only to win the battle not having the real concern over the future of their children. The author manages to create an excellent atmosphere that reveals the various disasters roaming

around the family. The future of the children is also hazard. This novel proves that Manju Kapur is a great curator of the modern Indian family.

Against the backdrop of a brand –new liberalized world, kapur sketches out Shagun’s boredom, Raman’s hurt and the confusion of their children, Roohi and Arjun who are batted back and forth between parents and across chapters. The two new partners in the equation, bossman Ashok and divorcee Ishita, struggle to woo their step kids while supporting their spouses through an endless legal battle. Ashok forges a bond with Arjun by packing him off to his old alma mater, a barely-disguised Doon School, while befuddled baby Roohi clings to Ishita. (1)

Manju Kapur’s novel *Custody* portrays the story of a married couple Raman and Shagun with their two children Arjun and Roohi who lead a happy life. But their happiness ended in the limited period of time after the arrival of Ashok Kanna, Raman’s boss. Shagun begins to have an affair with him which makes her broke the happiness of her family. She is not ready to look after her children as well as her husband. She wants to fulfill her desire beyond the age old tradition of her marriage. When Raman discovers their relationship Shagun had the guts to confront it and starts to pester for providing her a divorce and also she demands the custody of their children. On the other part of Delhi, a story revolves around Ishita, a divorcee whose marriage collapses because of her infertility. When she meets the divorced Raman her life become fruitful and happy to be a step mother to his children. At the beginning of this story Raman’s attitude is described as a dutiful husband and father who did his role without crossing the traditional bond of the society. Being the bread winner of his family, he worked hard for the welfare of his wife and children but when he comes back to the house he does not show much care towards his family members. He loves his profession more than them, which leads his wife to be frustrated.

When Shagun falls in love with Ashok, she does not regret about lying to her husband and her own mother. At once she leaves her children to the care of her mother when Raman was away; she enjoyed her time with Ashok. Her filial love makes her to be selfish and cruel enough to left her family. Through this the author exposes that she gives importance to the desires and inner experiences. She demands that the woman needs something more than what they have been provided. In one of her interview, she says

Literature by women about families always has these larger considerations, with years of studying texts, it becomes almost second nature to look beneath the surface at social and economic forces gender relationships and how they are played out in an arena that, in my writing happens to be the home. But then, all sort of things happening outside do affect what is happening inside the home. (2)

Manju Kapur portrays the typical mentality of Indian middle class family. She deals with the issue of infertility through the story of Ishita. In the initial stage of her marriage life her husband shows utmost love on her. But his love turns to cold when he knows that she could not give birth to a baby. Along with his parents he provides corporal treatment on her. She was treated by them cruelly. Her barrenness leads her to become a slave in their family. There is an unwritten law that the woman can get respect among the society only she gave birth to a baby, her role is allotted to labor. Ishita was abandoned by her husband shortly after her marriage. The divorced, isolated Ishita could not broke down, she had the will power to come out of her tragic condition and joined as a volunteer to teach an under privileged children which makes her to realize the real happiness in it. She was married to a divorced Raman at a second time, there begins the turning point in her life. She observes the real love and affection from her husband

and she satisfied in her role of being a step mother to his children. She shows motherly affection towards them. Her bonding with Roohi makes her fight along with Raman to get back the custody of her children from Shagun. But Shagun successfully manipulates the mind of Arjun against Ishita as a result he began to feel that Ishita is the main cause for his parents problem. So he completely hates her and does not want to take her as his step mother. In a fit of anger he tries to poison the mind of his sister Roohi, but Roohi is too young to take the words of him into her mind. At the age of three her only need is to get motherly affection which was fulfilled by Ishita so she grows her fondness over her step mother. Ishita was careful enough to pay attention on Roohi from the egoistic battle occurs between her parents. The modern women had the opportunity for getting education, employment which makes them to think about their self-discovery and self-dependent. This leads to have difficulties to adjust themselves in the marriage life, especially for the woman who craves for independent life. Similar things happened in Shagun's life too, soon after her marriage she trapped into motherhood which is a major barrier for her to attain her desire and act in an independent way. *Mithu Banerjee* writes in a review of *Custody*,

Although marriage is well-trodden territory for Kapur, here her possession of the subject is complete. In the accumulation of detail and her tone of emotional restraint, *Custody* becomes something more than just a social commentary, but a novel that is true to the universal angst of modern marriage, with its burden of individualism. (4)

Kapur narrates the contrary of relationship in this novel. For getting back the custody of his children, Raman is ready to go whatever extent. He precedes his demand with the help of the lawyer Nandan. At first Nandan, manage to claim a visitation rights to Raman after filing the

case against Shagun. He felt that this could be first victory of him to get back his children from her. The author describes the attitude of people varies in different circumstances. For instance she portrays, Shagun's mother treats Raman as her own son, but soon after the custody battle she began to treat him as if he is an enemy. The separation, constant shifting of home and continues battle of the parents affect Arjun and Roohi and they both were mentally disturbed. Though Raman and Shagun shows their egoistic to secure custody rights of their children, they fail to think about the future and mental condition of them. In general people think that it is fair enough to get divorced if they are not cope up with their spouse but in reality they put their children under risk for their own dream of happiness and they did not realize how it hurts them. It is the responsibility of the parents to be a back support of their children's development. *Dr. Jann Gumbiner*, a psychologist and a daughter of a divorced mother, shares her own experience in her article *Divorce Hurts Children, Even Grown Ones-*

During the 70s, when the psychological literature first discussed the effects of divorce on children, the general view was that divorce doesn't have to harm children. But, it does. Children, even intelligent ones or older ones, often think it is their fault. There is a lot of self-blame. Grades suffer. I lost my motivation in school. My grades went down. Not studying was a form of rebellion, anger and apathy. I really didn't care what became of me. Perhaps, the kid is stuck with a depressed mother who can't leave her room, clean up the kitchen, or take the child to school. This child is ashamed to invite friends home from school and friendships suffer. My brother couldn't play Little League because there was no one to drive him to games. Extra-curricular activities suffer.

(6)

Ishita and Shagun tries manipulate both their children to secure the custody of them. Ishita needs Roohi because she can't bear the child as her own whereas Shagun being the biological mother of both her children, claims her custody. The novel reveals the unimagined happenings of marriage. Manju Kapur gives us an insight how the separation of the parents affects the future of their children in an effective way. In India marriage can be considered as a sacred bond between couple and it is the responsibility of woman who make their life fruitful. But the author portrays Shagun as a new women want to live according to her own desire never minding about the traditional marriage bond, she gives importance only to her own desire. Sometimes the aspirations of a woman change the realities of their family happiness. Manju Kapur successfully portrays the tendency of modern women in the contemporary world.

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