

Self-affirmation in Manju Kapur's Novel *Custody*

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Abstract

Women writing become a manifestation of women's potential and rights and a consciousness of the essential emotional and self-identity that combine the experience of being female into an intrinsic imaginative continuum. A Critical study of the feminist concern in Manju Kapur's novels helps to express a perspective of attitudes that determines the constitution of women. Women have suffered for many years at the hands of discriminating forces. Kapur, in her novels, has tried to explore these forces. The four walls of the house restrict the world of women. Home is also a favourite thing for novelists like Manju Kapur to depict the emotional fulfilment and the lack of it. She also accepts the role of a preacher here at times and presents the pathetic condition of women in Indian Patriarchal Society. In the present novel, CUSTODY, the writer has raised the issues of globalization, liberalization, and drastically changing modes of society, along with the desire for liberty in women, infertility in women, and the hollowness of modern marriage.

Keywords: Self-identity, feminist concern, attitude perspective, emotional fulfillment & Patriarchal Society.

Introduction:

"A woman must be virtuous, chaste, submissive, homely, graceful, and devoted to her husband and his family. She must seek pleasure in these relationships. The faintest of any idea that ever existing primarily for the realization of oneself can never occur to her in the wildest of her dreams" (Akhileshwar 95).

In the novels of the Indian English women writers, the Indian woman has been studied and analyzed in her traditional background. Women novelists portray the struggling, conflicting, and frustrating Indian woman in their novels.

There emerged a group of Indian Women Novelists like Kamala Markandya, Nayantara Sahgal, Anita Desai, Kiran Desai, Shashi Deshpande, Jhumpa Lahiri, etc. who have handled the intimate life of women in a new light with extraordinary boldness and frankness; Manju Kapur is again a distinguished figure in the world of novels. Manju Kapur, who, through the medium of her stories, has tried to grapple with different manifestations of male domination against women, her writings carry out significant new meanings in the changed exemplar of cultural encounters in which conjugal roles, dual burdens, equal opportunities, and social constraints are seen from the feminist point of view. Manju Kapur has worldwide popularity.

Janet Chawla, and Speaking up for Inter-Community or Cross Marriages in Outlook (New Delhi) 14 January 2007. She is an emerging star of Indi-Anglican Fiction and a famous writer of the day with a considerable impact on her writing. She was born on 25

October 1948 and married Gun Nidhi Dalmia, a businessperson. She is down-to-earth, welcoming, considerate, and the best of hosts. She has four children named Katyayani, Amba, Maya, and Agastya.

Self-affirmation in Kapur's novel:

The paper throws light on the conviction, challenges, and self-affirmation required in every woman at every stage of life.

The present novel, *Custody* (2011), is her latest novel that deals with the problems coming after divorce. There are two problems- divorce and custody of children- which have become the novel's themes. Raman is working as a marketing executive in Global Drinks Company, and Shagun, his wife, is extraordinarily beautiful. They have two children, Arjun, who looks like Shagun, and Roohi, who looks like his father, Raman, and have everything they desire. Then Shagun meets Ashok, Raman's dynamic boss, and everything changes. Raman and Shagun- a husband and wife who love each other, now become an enemy to each other, and the battle begins for the custody of their children. It is the story of how love can disintegrate into an obsession to possess children, their bodies, and soul, as well as a chilling critique of the Indian judicial system. We caught the middle part of the novel, where childless Ishita loved the idea of motherhood. Ishita and Surykanta have an arranged marriage. But Ishita would not be able to be a mother, and they separated from each other mutually and got divorced. Ashok Khanna sends Arjun, Raman, and Shagun to a boarding school at DAS (Dehradun Academic School). Shagun also desires to send Roohi to a boarding school, but she is too little to send. Ishita meets Raman after her divorce from Suryakant. They mutually agree to marry simply and unconventionally:

One significant thing to notice is the two pairs who stand in binary opposition to each other in the case of Shagun and Raman; it is Shagun who wants a divorce to lead a life of freedom, comfort, and luxury. Raman is at the receiving end. In the case of Ishita and Surykant, Surykant wants a divorce from Ishita.

Here Surykant wants a divorce for social reasons. Ishita cannot beget children, and this is a stigma for a woman in Indian society. (Kumar, Sastendra 46)

Whenever a couple decides to depart and divorce, children suffer the most. Arjun takes the side of his mother. However, he does not like to go to a boarding school. Kapur has displayed how a divorce can draw a different life. In this sense, Ishita devotes her time to social service and a joyous escape. Manju Kapur creates such situations in which Ishita comes nearer to Raman. Both have lost their other halves. Both appear defeated and broken, and they gain strength after coming together.

The paper examines the present novel *Custody* and depicts her revolt against the old age tradition without being partial to anybody. After divorce, custody of children makes the system legal practically but haunts the emotions of children, parents, and family members. Arjun looks like Shagun and behaves as well, but his inner conflict cannot define the person he finally wants to go to, but she chooses his mother, Shagun, to live with. On the contrary, Roohi does not understand the person she wants to live with but decides to go with Raman and Ishita, her stepmother. Ishita, a childless divorcee, marries Raman, and Raman accepts her because he needs the motherly love for Roohi. He knows that Ishita cannot conceive. It may be why he gets her as a wife because Roohi needs maternal affection, and Ishita provides for her. In this novel, everybody has to pay the price for what they want. Ishita wants to be a teacher after her divorce from Suryakanta. Still, she has to surrender to the Indian social values and keeps herself safe from the disaster of the anti-social milieu.

Conclusion:

The present paper portrays the devastating effects of divorce on family members in the novel *Custody*. It reveals the theme of the failure of arranged marriage and converts into the remarriage of two divorced couples. Shagun steps forward to being far from alienated as Astha does. After twelve years of married life with Raman and have two

children. Shagun decides to leave her husband and departs her children as she knows only one can get them. Despite being honest and innocent, Raman could not provide his physical existence to Shagun. As we know, he did all these only to facilitate the family more comfort, but he forgets that her wife has extra desires except for this kind of comfort. Shagun becomes a new woman that breaks all the boundaries of the patriarchal norms and rebels for independence which was long denied to her, at the cost of her children and happy married life. Ishita does not lose her hopes and begins her new life with Raman and becomes a birth mother of Roohi in the true sense. This is how various women characters as protagonists in the works of Manju Kapur are depicted. All these characters create multiple images of women in Indian past and present society.

Kapur has depicted the characters as the breakers of the tradition of silence. They are seen from the feminist point of view through her writings. The protagonists of her novels are constantly trying to break the silence of suffering, making them strong. They struggle to free themselves from the shackles of tradition and various traditions. All her novels observe the continuity with their predecessors in portraying the lives of Indian middle-class and lower-middle-class families and, above all, their women members struggling to break the age-old silence against gender-based domination and violence in the patriarchal Indian society.

In the changed cultural circumstances, Manju Kapur's women characters do not essentially become the victims of their male counterparts in a patriarchal society. Still, they are shown their new problems as new responsibilities, availability of equal opportunity, social limitations, new freedom, etc.

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