
Conjugal Disharmony in Custody- A Critical Perspective

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Abstract

Manju Kapur is one of the most prominent novelists in modern Indian English Literature. Female characters in her writing are often well-educated, optimistic women who are trapped in a man-centred culture. Their education enables them to become self-reliant and provides them opportunities to walk hand in hand with their father, husband, and siblings lending moral and financial to their families. In the confined moderate society, their free reasoning becomes an impediment to their perspectives, sentiments, and expressions. They are caught in the woe of tradition and often it difficult to embrace modernity. This paper aims at analysing the one-on-one battle of these women with their families and their conflict with the societal taboos and norms.

Maternity is a source of female power as well as a source of male-centric control and management of female sexuality and organisation. In a traditional system, a woman has no place as an individual; she must be a mother, a wife or a sister. Women are driven to keep their bodies and sexuality hidden from their families and society. The most important explanation is that making love is a way of life that produces progeny. The celebration of fatherhood is used as a

glorious way to talk about a girl's sexuality. If not, the women only be blamed for not begetting children. Manju Kapur depicts the shifting image of women in her clever, moving away from traditional representations of persevering, generous women and towards confident, self-assured, and forceful women who make society aware of their importance. The main objective of this paper titled, Conjugal Disharmony in Custody- A Critical Perspective is to explore how conjugal relationships suffer owing to various factors and what kind of irksome situations the characters experience in common middle-class families in Indian society as well challenges in married life. This paper examines the manner in which the women characters overcome the challenges arising out of conjugal disharmony.

Keywords: Infidelity, new woman, male domination, traditional marriage system, sexual freedom, maternity and unusual relationships.

Introduction

In an interview, Manju Kapur, who is considered to be the Jane Austen of modern Anglo-Indian literature, tells James Kidd about the best and worst of India's traditions and she portrays the predicament of women in traditional man-centred cultures, where their minds are jumbled, producing marital strife. Her heroines fight against traditional society's constraints and friendly shows. Astha in 'A Married Woman' and Virmati in 'Difficult Daughters', all fighting against the odds, emerge as "new women" with a free philosophy and total transformation. Her works are depictions of women's independence and freedom. The advanced women emerge from limited socio-social areas and modern perspectives. As a result, the protagonists in Manju Kapur's tales refuse to surrender to man-centric culture's deeply ingrained traditions and customs. In her novels, she tells the stories of Indian families from the working class. She looks at issues like lesbianism, betrayal, fruitlessness, infertility, separation, reception, and sexual abuse, among others.

Manju Kapur's writings are set in the context of a few major political events. Her ingenious "Custody" was immersed in a flurry of unfamiliar, authentic, or risky situations. Brokers, industrialists, administrators, and, unexpectedly, the companies in monetary and monetary development were all drawn to globalisation and economic liberalization. Normally, the heroines in "custody" are engrossed in the vain desires of material wealth.

Manju Kapur depicts the shifting image of women in her clever, moving away from traditional representations of women as persevering, generous women and towards confident, forceful and self-assured women who can make society conscious of their importance. In the words of Manju Kapur, "It is an endeavour to integrate a component of creative and profound mindfulness." In actuality, a relationship with a woman does not jeopardize a marriage in the same way that a relationship with a man does.

One of her novels "Custody" published in is set against the background of an affluent but morally bankrupt metropolitan working class family in Delhi. Both Shagun and Ishita are roles apart representing opposite track. At the same time Kapur also depicts the lives of urban Indian working-class people who yearn for wealth, opportunity, and achievement. It's also a tale of child guardianship and a sluggish Indian legal system.

Manju Kapur explores the emptiness of contemporary existence through four adult characters: Raman, Shagun, Ashok Khanna, and Ishita, as well as two children: Arjun and Roohi. The novelist shows how the structure of marriage has changed over time, leading to separate legal guardianship. Raman is a father and a husband, yet his professional career takes precedence over his significant other and children. He is devoted to his profession and spends his days bringing in money. Shagun is

responsible for his children and his responsibilities at home.

Raman's family also believes that a woman's self-hood, dignity, and decency are found in her motherhood and wifehood. His lovely wife, Shagun, falls hopelessly in love with Raman's gorgeous boss, Ashok Khanna. Shagun is head over heels in love with Ashok Khanna, and he continues to bully her into submission like a marketeer. She is in a predicament and constant conflict as a mother, a wife, and a darling, but as the project becomes more enthralling and intense, she has no regrets about deceiving her husband and her mother. She gives her children to her mother and spends the weekends with her darling. She neglects the responsibility of being a good mother and a good daughter-in-law and intoxicating the tender minds of her children but also, she continues to indoctrinate her children against their father. She finally decides to go separate ways.

Raman reacts vehemently when understands that his wife, Shagun has been in love with his boss, Ashok Khanna. The prevailing condition of not sparing time for his wife and family might have thrown him into this chaos. She has also told him many times that she is not at all interested in begetting children and is monotonous to remain as just a house-wife as other traditional people do. She doesn't consider her acts immoral and disloyal. Her mother makes a determined effort to persuade her to devote herself to her partner and makes a statement about the Indian culture's social manners and sorrows. She considers

extra-marital affairs to be a violation and sacrilege. In her extra-marital relationship with Ashok, Shagun searches for her lost identity. She is upset and warns her mother that she can never trust her. She must break free from the protective environment of his disturbed family. She rebels because she has been denied opportunities like acting in advertisements and films for a long time. The predicament of children in broken families is vividly depicted by Manju Kapur.

As a result of separation, the family structure disintegrates and self-destructs into parts. Shagun must bear a great deal because of his divorce to gain freedom of will and independence. The story comes the closest to the public's expectations, demonstrating how women like Shagun might cross the line of conjugal status due to unexpected factors such as extra-marital relationships, materialistic ambitions, and so on. The tangible stakes here are the children. It is through the children, Arjun and Roohi that we see how a beautiful childhood and adolescence may be ruined when the guardians' self-image and assumptions act against the children's tender and sensitive personalities. She renegades to satisfy her urges, unaware of the fact that she has been a victim of male patriarchy since her childhood. In any event, the truth remains that the domestic disharmony has ruined the lives of the two honest kids. They are torn between two mothers, two houses, and two countries. Shagun, on the other hand, isn't

much concerned with friendly respectability or family disgrace.

Kapur portrays the objectionable act of Shagun's relationship with Ashok Khanna for life-long as an opportunity to grow professionally and also to discard tradition. Her yearning for satisfaction is clear in the following lines. She sank down immediately to him, realising she would experience bliss she had never known. If she somehow happened to pass on tomorrow, it would be as a "satisfied lady" (113). Shagun's demonstration of sexual infringement celebrates female sexual self-declaration, typified by a new feministic suspicion that a lady is a wanting subject with a deep yearning for sexual articulation, fulfilment, and satisfaction: "She sank down straightaway to him; she realised she would separate is obstructing the sanctity of the nation, which is much more than sex. Shagun, as a "renewed person," realises the potential of her "being" through a journey of self-discovery, embarking on a secret battle with society over the need for regular proclivities over friendly decencies. She is a lady in this new relationship that she has chosen. She was aware of the choices she had and was intrigued by the strange and unique ways people lived and loved in opposition to the threatening and subversive common view.

Shagun is overjoyed with her new connection and exudes confidence in her capacity to overcome the problems. Her display of sexual infringement honours women's right to self-declare their sexuality, as shown by a new feministic

premise that shows a strong desire for sexual expression:

Ishita's story runs parallel to Shagun's in Custody, as she has been stripped of her married status. In Kapur's novel, 'Custody', the shallowness of married life is revealed when a woman's infertility is stigmatised. She is subjected to tremendous mental suffering, particularly by her mother-in-law, who exemplifies patriarchal culture. The in-laws are relieved when the medical report indicates Ishita's inability to conceive because it is she, not their son, who is incapable of bearing children. The aggressive mother-in-law has no respect for her own gender. The root cause is female oppression has sparked debate all across the world. The advent of class society, according to Karl Marx's Communist Manifesto, is the source of women's oppression. Manju Kapur delineated the circumstances vividly when the procedure of IVF has failed in the case of Ishitha. She has to face many hurdles that were only because of infertility. When her periods start after the successful procedure of IVF, everyone in the family of Suryakantha are aghast. Suryakantha also doesn't want to make love with her when it is fruitless. In-laws have been waiting for an occasion to get rid of their daughter-in-law stating that she was unable to give a progeny to their family in order to continue their bloodline. Her plight is lucid in the following lines.

Her period. Her bloody period. Each sanitary napkins soaking up thousands of rupees, hours of energy,

months of expectation now to be wrapped in old newspaper and discreetly disposed of. (Custody- Page no:64)

Marriage binds people together in relationships as spouses, wives, fathers by marriage, mothers by marriage, little girls, in-law, sisters by marriage, and children, among others. Marriage is also a heavenly cling that should be valued. John Stuart Mill in his *The Subjection of Women*, refers to an ideal relationship in marriage when he writes: What marriage may be in the case of two persons of cultivated faculties, identical in opinion and purposes, between whom exists the best kind of equality, similarity of powers and capacities with reciprocal superiority over them- so that each can enjoy the luxury of looking up to the other, and can have alternately the pleasure of leading and of being led in the path of development...I maintain with the proudest conviction that this, and this only, is the ideal of marriage. (235)

A woman has been reduced to a submissive individual for whom the home is an urgent place of abuse. Men in the entrepreneur class regard women's jobs as useless and undervalued. A woman's subjugation is a form of class persecution that is maintained because it benefits capital and the decision-making class. Communist women's activists acknowledge that it is put together about the monetary framework, as well as male-dominated society and private enterprise. Ishita is nothing more than a body. "Women have always been men, whether they are his slaves or not. The two genders have never shared the universe

fairly," writes Simone de Beauvoir in her book *"The Second Sex."* is also severely incapacitated today, but her situation is beginning to heal."

Manju Kapur's novel, 'Custody' is a narrative of female hardship, endurance, and achieving their aims and desires. The novel is a series of events and episodes that focus on affected familial relationship caused by separation, divorce, and remarriage, as well as the growth of legal strategy on the problem of guardianship. The sufferings and forlornness of the two children in the book are vividly conveyed by Manju Kapur. The work can be considered a legitimate representation of Indian culture. Manju Kapur's female characters are audacious enough to handle the cruel and sluggish turns of the Indian legal system and how it works.

Manju Kapur's female characters have risen above societal conventions and attempt to defy the male-centric requirements of strident marriage's conventional ideas and restrictions. The brave female protagonists are introduced as real women with thoughts and opinions of their own. Aside from that, students aspire to be a part of the educational process in order to establish their identity. Shagun defied his wedlock in order to win her admiration. She continues to cherish her new love life despite being married and having children. Ishita, on the other hand, was destitute and alone, so she reached out to herself in friendly aid to fill the void in her life. She wants to find another life in Raman's broken family and bring it back

to life by marrying him. She treats Raman's little girl, Roohi, as if she were her own child and lavishes attention on her. Shagun and Ishita are shown in this scene as a mirror image. Ishita is nice no matter what, since she takes care of other people's kids, while Shagun, who is the mother, wants to be her own person.

Conclusion

The extensive analysis of conjugal relationships in of the novel Manju Kapur examines particularly dominating patriarchy and tolerant, amenable women who played a vital role in the gratification of male carnal drives for ensuing clone of their race. They are delineated as uncultured, supererogatory, ignorant, unlettered and restricted in the circumference of conjugal bond. They stand stringent and accomplish within limits of given conditions and horizontally fight against injustice and consequently being faced austere social critique. In consequence they precede controlled, constricted vision for their life and seek self-reliance, dignity and autonomy. Ingeniously enough their literary canvas exemplifies women primarily as restrained, accommodative and submissive while at the same time the vigor voice with multiple strata of social critique makes them become strong and confident enough to overcome their own predicaments. Thus, their constructive and formative assessment examines alternative identities, aspirations and images against the socio-conjugal evils of the marital bond and disloyalty.

Manju Kapur's novel 'Custody' is an engrossing novel about a burgeoning group of young, educated female protagonists who can pick the bearing of their destiny with such ease, regardless of the underlying moral repercussions. Custody, directed by Manju Kapur, depicts the breakdown of relationships, social lip service, and claims for children's guardianship as a reality signifying possessiveness and inconsistent power relations in male-centric families where there is limitation, persecution, viciousness, possessiveness, and crumbling.

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