



ISSN 2455-7544
www.daathvoyagejournal.com

Daath Voyage : An International Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in English

An UGC Refereed Open Access Journal

Vol. 2 No.3, September, 2017

Editor : Saikat Banerjee

<http://daathvoyagejournal.com>

Editor: Saikat Banerjee

Department of English

Dr. K.N. Modi University, Newai, Rajasthan, India.



The Untold Story Of Divorce Told By Manju Kapur's *Custody*

A. Asha Banu

Associate Professor,
Department of English,
IFET College of Engineering,
Villupuram.
E-mail: mrashabanu@yahoo.com
&

Dr. B.Rajarajeswari Jayarani

Assistant Professor
Department of English
Arignar Anna Govt. Arts College,
Villupuram.
E-mail:rajeshcmd@yahoo.com

Abstract: *Custody* is a novel of women's distresses, sufferings and their happiness, and also the way in which they conquer their wishes and aspirations. Nowadays women are fond of freedom and they break the walls for their breathing of fresh free air and they are constructing a world of their own. Manju Kapur's novels illustrate new women who are struggling for their identity. In this paper, Shagun and Ishita are the protagonists portrayed as different image and controversial views as a modern sculpture. They fight for the old tradition and culture and they want to expose their freedom as their wish.

Key words: *sufferings, infertility, infidelity, identity, new woman.*

Manju Kapur's novels attain a momentous new sense when read at the point of view of traverse beliefs of traditional critical thinking. Her novels endow instances of a whole collection of outlook towards the importation of belief. However, she appears awake to the actual fact that women of India have achieved their success in sixty years of Independence. However if there's to be a real feminine independence, an excessive amount of remains are yet to be done. The conflict for self-sufficiency and distinct identity remain as an incomplete combat. In the past, women underneath the patriarchal burden and management were, subjected to an excessive amount of burns and convivial reclusion. They were segregated and were unfair in lien of their gender.



Custody, is the story of marital life, divorce and the custody. The novel is a familiar portrayal of marriage and family. After the separation of Raman and Shagun, they claim the custody of their children, Arjun and Roohi. It reveals the tough reality of divorce, particularly when children are labyrinthine. The course of the novel is full of anger and clash. Shagun and Ishita are portrayed as middle-class protagonists. They are so bold enough to take decisions and lead their life as they wish. Kapur illustrates the characters of Shagun and Ishita with sorrows and sufferings and they put their efforts with a tireless task 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.

Raman, who is working as a corporate advertiser, is intelligent and Shagun is gorgeous where this is a typical arranged marriage decided by their parents. Even though Shagun's marriage is an arranged one, she is not feeling comfortable. Shagun's daring personality makes her select hedonistic lifestyle in order to find out her own space in the society, without bothering anyone. She is a freed non-traditional woman. She wants to live for her own desire. Though she is an urban middle-class woman, she is fond of luxurious life. She gets bored with her daily routine normal life and is attracted by the modern life. Raman and Shagun have many contrary opinions among themselves regarding the tenure of their children and her way of life as modern Indian woman searching for freedom. She is having two children a toddler daughter and eight years older boy, but "she practices thinking badly of her spouse. The dissatisfaction that accurses in most marriages was not allowed dissipation; instead, she clung to reasons to justify her unfaithfulness"(C 2).

Shagun, just doesn't want a moderate life with two children, she gets into an affair with her husband's boss Ashok Kanna who is luxurious and modern. Ashok is portrayed as a despotic boss who wants to establish his trade market. Ashok also tried to seduce Shagun. They both just want to lead a happy life independently. She leaves her children and lives with him without bothering her husband and the family. She does not bother her patriarchal society. Raman is ashamed of his untrustworthy wife and he is totally collapsed. The innocent children are the real sufferers of the disastrous marriage of their parents. The



children Arjun and Roohi feel devastated of their parent's deportation. The beautiful family is fully malformed by her lustful activity. Shagun kidnaps her children from her husband. Raman's parents decide to meet an advocate Mr.Nandan to handle this case.

The children's routine work totally gets disturbed. Arjun's concentration on his studies gets deviated and Roohi's anxiety increases because of their parent's partition. Arjun feels depressed and he could not concentrate on his studies. Arjun starts fussing over school and his performance becomes very worst in the test and he feels disgusted to go to the school. Meanwhile Arjun's leg is hurt and he couldn't get up. So Shagun takes him to the doctor. He said that Arjun is physically good but mentally he is upset and thinking of something and that's why his leg is injured. Shagun asked, "Is something bothering you, beta? The doctor thought you might be upset and that is why you have a slight discomfort in your leg. Mind and body are one, you know" (C 162). Shagun wants to make a better life for her son Arjun.

Accordingly she entreats him to join a boarding school so that he can study well and make his life much better. But Arjun refuses to go to school, he is not mentally good, he wants to live together with his parents, which gives pleasure to him in all his actions. She easily makes up his son's mind with her mesmerizing words and keeps him by her side giving costly gifts and arranging trips in summer holidays. After some years she wants to meet her daughter. Roohi also feels timid. Ishita, the second wife of Raman prevents Roohi to meet her mother. She feels her acquaintance with her mother may cause deportation of her with Raman. So she barred the girl to meet her mother. Shagun also bans the boy to meet his father. The battle between the parents cause ruin to the life of the children. Kapur articulates in her Random Reads interview that "rather than focus on the divorce, infidelity etc., I look at the consequences of these actions, which I find more interesting. Not what propels a divorce, but what the long term consequences of this are for everybody concerned".

Mrs. Sabharwal belongs to the old traditional culture of women who considers the pleasure of others. She is always worried about her daughter Shagun's life, her children and her son- in- law. She is aware of the society and she bothers about the people. She believes that the home is the ideal place for women who are fully built with joy, care, affection and



love. She realises marriage is the holy unity of man and woman and divorce is an evil curse to the woman. But Shagun is a modern woman and thinks divorce is not an evil thing. She wants to live her life without any perception of others. She ponders her mother as an orthodox woman. Shruti Ravindran illustrates, “Kapur’s dissection of South and East Delhi manners will continue to be of relevance as long as there are mothers so anxious to ‘settle’ their daughters, they pay keener attention to their body clocks than their selves”. Mrs.Sabharwal called Shagun and her grandchildren to stay with her for few days. But Shagun refuses to come and she calls her mother to her home. She says that she is going for a two day trip to her friend’s home but Sahharwal thought that she didn’t know about her friend for past 30 years. She thinks that there is some change in her daughter’s character. She neglects to share her views, ideas, opinions, problems and difficulties in her life with her mother. Without the knowledge of her family she leaves her house and lives with Ashok. “She had to say goodbye, in a way that wouldn’t hurt him, then go to her life with Raman, that joyless, dismal, uninteresting life” (C 106).

Mrs.Rajora is a librarian at Arts faculty at Delhi University. She has one child, a daughter Ishita. She is young and beautiful. At her childhood, she was affected by TB. For nine months the child was on TB drugs. Mrs.Rajora says, “A low-class disease, thought the panic-stricken mother, as in a fit of anger she fired the help- these people- you never knew with these people” (C 49). Eventually, the caring paid off and Ishita grows stronger. She has pursued B.A. and the family decides that she should do B.Ed. If she gets a government job, she will have security in her life. Ishita begins to apply for teaching jobs, and a good offer comes. But her family is traditional and they decide to arrange the marriage to their daughter with Surya Kanta a 25 year old man, who is well educated, handsome and well settled.

After many discussions, Ishita marries Surya Kanta. She is very happy in her life for one year. Their family informs to Ishita that there is no need to go for a job. Surya’s salary is much enough for them. But they insist for a grandchild. There was a little point in distressing a child, and there was no sign of pregnancy. Rajora worries about her daughter. So she and Ishita meet a doctor for infertility problem. The boy’s family begins to make the great fuzz.



“They are beginning to ask, why haven’t you conceived?”(C 53). She does fasting and special prayers with the compulsion of her in laws. After few days Ishita consults the fertility expert Dr.Suhashini Guha, American trained doctor. The Doctor listens to her story and then diagnosis her fallopian tubes. Then Ishita is suggested to get an HSG treatment. At that situation, Ishita comes to know that she was affected by TB disease in her childhood. Hence this is the major problem for her. After knowing that she gets much worried and she says “I don’t keep secrets from him” (C 58) and conveys the message to her - in law’s and her husband.

The parents suggested Ishita go for a second treatment. But she is not ready. As days passed there is no sign of pregnancy. Her husband starts to avoid her. Mrs.Rajora drags her daughter to an astrologer. He looks at her palm and said that she will have a child only if she wears a white pearl ring. Even after, that there is no sign of pregnancy. Her husband doesn’t speak to her. She sees her husband only at the dining table. She stays alone in her room. Surya’s family asks divorce from her. They ask her “You must have known you couldn’t have a child. You will never get a paisa from us. How long do you think you can go on eating our salt?” (C 70).

Mr.Rajora and Mr. Kaushik are in the same apartment. One evening they both talk about their children’s life. Mr. & Mrs. Rajora are worried about the pathetic condition of Ishita. One fine day Mrs. Hingorani, the neighbour of Ishita, asks her if she is interested to serve as a volunteer for slum back students and for their studies, she will also accompany her. Ishita also wants a change and she accepts the offer. Every morning she wakes up with cheer and joy. “The sight of all children was detestable, but those from the slums were a different breed, not the adorable creatures that fate had robbed her of, but urchins who were visible everywhere with their running noses and sharp ways” (C 126). Her parents get surprised to see their daughter going for a job, but they thought that this is not suitable for her, as she wanted to go for a corporate job. Ishita also tries at many schools for jobs but she doesn’t get any.



Mrs.Hingorani suggests Ishita adopt a baby so that she will have some inspiration and meaning to live. Her parents will not come along with her whole life and after them she has to take care of herself. When she has a baby, she will have a meaningful life. So Ishita decides to adopt a baby. But her parents refuse to accept the idea of adopting a child, they want Ishita to marry someone and settle her life. But Ishita convinces her parents and three of them get ready for adoption. It is just three days of the process to adopt a girl child. But the process failed.

The custody case comes to court, Raman and Shagun arrive at the court, where Shagun files for divorce and Raman files for custody. Though Shagun has already trained Arjun about how to react in court for the questions asked by the judge and she expresses “Arjun is old enough. I can explain things to him-but Roohi? What can a two –year-old understand?” (C 94). After the hearing, the court ordered the custody of the boy with his mom but he can meet his father and spend time with him in the weekend. Shagun feels infidelity, his rationality is too cold and to think that she has not told him about the efforts. Arjun made to contact his father. She prays for Arjun that her only son is to be with her and also a divorce. One day Shagun goes to meet Mrs. Sabharwal and tells her that Ashok is offered a US job, and they are shifting to the US. Mrs. Sabharwal gets shocked and worried about the children’s future but Shagun convinces.

Shagun hopes that Ashok doesn’t discriminate them and he continues to be involved in her children’s life very eagerly and she had absolute faith in Ashok. Shagun slowly tells Roohi, that she is going away for a while, so she could go and live with her father. But Roohi refuses to go instead, she prefers to be with her, she doesn’t want to live away from her, then Shagun instantly regretted all she had said and tells her daughter that, “You are still my baby girl. Remember that I love you. Always, always” (C 244). A week later, Raman and Shagun are divorced. Raman thinks that “she wanted nothing from him- nothing except her freedom. Not a shred, not a pin, not a rupee would she keep of their former life” (C 246).

Mrs. Rajora worries about her daughter’s life. She wants to settle her daughter’s life. Though Mrs.Rajora and Ishita have invited by Mrs.Kaushik to meet her son, Ishita has heard



these pre-directions often. Her mother only wants her to get married so that she could have an old companionship. Ishita gets ready and goes to Mrs. Kaushik home with her mother. She talks to Raman and spends some time with Roohi. Then Raman asks about her NGO. Ishita feels happy in spending time with Raman and Roohi.

Mrs. Kaushik and Mrs. Rajora wish that their children get married. Mrs. Kaushik thought that Ishita is a girl with heart, a homemaker and entertains his child. They believe her definitely that she'll take care of their son. Raman thought of Ishita, that "he had his children, no one could take them away from him, and they were blood of his own blood, flesh of his flesh. This girl- woman -had nothing" (C 256). But they both don't want to push them in another; they want to devote their lonely life Ishita's hands sparkles with true love. She showers her love and affection to Roohi without any intention. When she is with Roohi, she loves her with unconditional mother's love. Then Ishita has said to her parents about her love for Raman. Mrs. Rajora's eyes are filled with tears and she thinks that it is a miracle that her daughter has got this fortuitous of repaying to statue so offensively snatched from her.

Roohi is well attached with Ishita and she starts to lay along with her every night. Roohi has just turned four. Shagun neglects her responsibilities to be a good mother to her child. But Ishita who is not the biological mother takes care of Roohi with full love and affection. One day Raman tells Ishita that he had applied for a marriage license. They get married in the court. They would tell their parents after it is all over. Then Raman and Ishita convey about the marriage to their parents. Initially, they get shocked. Then they gladly accept their marriage. They decide to tell Roohi about this and she also accepts the marriage for him that was ultimately the most important thing. Now Arjun is left.

Ishita starts her life with Raman and Roohi, morphing suddenly into a wife. Ishita takes care of Roohi well. She takes her for dance class, piano class. In the weekend, they go to the zoo. Roohi walked between her parents. All things considered, they are happy. Raman wishes his wife is not so keen on his daughter's education. Once home he deserves the glow on Ishita's face that came from successful family living.



Daath Voyage

: An International Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in English

ISSN 2455-7544

www.daathvoyagejournal.com

Vol.2, No.3, September, 2017

In olden days, women suffered a lot. They adjusted and compromised everything for the arranged marriage. They never had guts to approach for divorce and separation. They hindered with sorrows and they led the miserable life. Now, the modern women have clear cut ideas of their own. Their contrary views are clarified by them and they travel in their own path. Shagun and Ishita are two modern women, sustained their life favourably by their own decision making and never bothered about the society. They got the divorce and they made their life as their wish by marrying their own companion.

Works Cited

Kapur, Manju. *Custody*. Random House, 2011.

---. "Random Reads: An Interview." Random India House, 29 Mar. 2011. Accessed on 30 June 2017.

Ravindran, Shruti. "The Indian Express." *The Indian Express*, 23 June 2016, Accessed on 30 June 2017. www.indianexpress.com/.