

“Leading Female Characters in Manju Kapur’s Custody”

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Received: 25/10/2016**Revised:** 15/11/2016**Accepted:** 18/11/2016**ABSTRACT:-**

While dealing with issue of divorce and infertility the first thing that comes into one’s mind is how a woman will manage in family. What are the problems ahead in her life? Important issue that creates here is the question of her identity. How she is tyrannized by same gender. The paper aims to analyze the wide spectrum of women’s emotions towards other women. In my paper I have tried to show that a woman is unable to understand the feelings of same gender.

Key words: self identity, traditional values, freedom.**INTRODUCTION:-**

Custody narrates the story of Raman and Shagun ,a married couple with two children , eight year old Arjun and three year old Roohi, who enjoy a privileged life. Soon Shagun meets Ashok khanna, Raman’s boss, and they immediately fall in love.

Custody, deals with marriages that collapse social hypocrisies and battles for children that intervene with anguish and conflict depicting a worldwide reality of politics of possessiveness and unequal power relations in patriarchal families.

The story unfolds the subject of matrimony is at its most intolerable followed by the emotional fall out of the breakup of one wealthy extended Delhi family.

Relationship of Raman and Shagun comes to a juddering end when Shagun, wife of Raman ,falls in love of his charismatic boss Ashok Khanna.

Kapur explores the hollowness of modern life as the story revolves around Raman, Shagun, Ishita, a childless divorcee and Ashok Khanna.

Here it finds three face of woman. Shagun a rebel, her mother in law a typical woman and Ishita as a traditional woman.

In a very short time shagun finds herself struggling to define herself in the role of a wife,

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mother, and lover. She asks Raman for divorce but he denies. And this matter turns into a bitter battle for in the court. Here Shagun fought for the freedom she had long wanted but it was at the cost of her children and a happy married life.

In India arranged marriages have been preferred and considered, marriages are destined in heaven. In the old times woman had to compromise greatly with her belongings and emotions. That happened because the woman was mostly illiterate and dependent on the man. But in modern era because of the spread of education, there has individual identity in both the genders, particularly the fair sex.

Shagun seems to acknowledge herself on the equal footing with man. Dilemma of an educated and professional woman who encounters competing ideologies of traditional femininity and empowered femininity has also been depicted. Shagun does not want to sacrifice her own life and happiness. She wants to build her own space.

Ishita has an arranged marriage but as soon as her husband and in – laws discover that she cannot conceive ,despite the many tedious medical treatment she undergoes, she feels small and psychological distorted :

“Smaller than the ants on the ground, smaller than the motes

of the dust in the sunlit air, smaller than drops of dew caught between blades of grass in the morning was Ishita as she sat in the gynecologist’s office” (65)

In ‘Custody’ parallel to shagun’s story runs Ishita’s tale who has been deprived of her rights. Ishita’s life exposes the shallowness of marital life where a woman is stigmatized because of her infertility. She is the kind of character in the novel who does not progress; she represents the kind of human being in real life. Ishita is humiliatd by society for being a woman for not having children. Roohi’s custody constitutes Ishita’s last chance to cure her past frustration and be accepted as “ a good mother”. Bina Agarwal says:

*“The family in India has not been a cradle for nurturing democratic values. The need for a democratic family structure is a major challenge for the families and not just for woman”.*¹

Traditional woman had gentleness, empathy and sensitivity. Traditional woman perceives their ideal women as having more expressive than instrumental traits.

Ishita’s mother in law is typical mother in law of the Indian patriarchal society where a daughter is treated as a daughter and a daughter in law is treated as a daughter in law. Being a woman she failed to empathies with Ishita’s condition. Many writers and feminist have strewed

their expression about women and their problems. Karl Marx in his

“The communist Manifesto’ in 1848 had depicted: The bourgeois sees in his wife a mere instrument of production. He hears that the instruments of production are to be exploited in common and naturally can come to no other conclusion than that the lot of being common to all will likewise fall to woman.²”

When Ishita’s mother in law takes a detailed discussion with the doctor to go to the depth of the matter to see the medical cause of failure, her curiosity is satisfied as it is not her son how is impotent but her daughter in law who is infertile.

The novelist brings out the callous nature of the mother in law who fails to understand and respect the same gender kind.

The root cause of all problems is the patriarchal system and men’s domination to women. Kapur is successful in exposing the fact of how a daughter in law is discarded from the household and the family for only one reason. Ishita has to bear the cost of her infertility. The theme of loneliness in marriages is running through the novel in every plot and subplot. Mostly women have to bear the burden of loneliness in life.

Other side Shagun is no longer confined within the four walls of the family and traditional values. She dares to break down the conventional perceptions and dogmas of the patriarchal society or the bonds of incompatible marriage. In their quest for identity the bold women characters of Kapur are presented by her as real women of flesh and blood who have their own emotion and sentiments.

‘Custody’ explores the difficulties of reconciling the devotion to family expected of middle class Indian women with their aspirations and desires for a life outside. Kiran Nagarkar says:

“I am interested in the lives of women, whether in the political arena or domestic spaces. One of the main preoccupations in all my books is how women manages to negotiate both the inner and outer spaces in their lives what sacrifices do they have to make in order to keep the home fires burning and at what cost to their personal lives do they find some kind of fulfillment outside the home.³”

CONCLUSION:-

Manju kapur's effort to draw women character in old aged traditional indian society. She highlights those issues of feminism that are endemic to the situation in India in order to help us understand how difficult it is for women to arrive at an evolved state of mind being trapped within the matrix of religion and tradition. Tradition is deep rooted in India and in the traditional system Indian society is organized around gender division giving more space to male for dominance.

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