

A Critical Study on Fractured Families in Manju Kapur's *Custody* and Jaishree Misra's *Afterwards*

^[1]K. Muneeswari , ^[2] Dr. A. Parvathavarthini,

^[1]Ph.D Scholar ,Reg. no 17222024012003, ^[2] Research Supervisor

^[1] ^[2]Aditanar College of Arts and Science, Tiruchendur

^[1] ^[2]Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Tirunelveli-

^[1] eswarimunees@gmail.com ^[2] apvarthini@gmail.com

Abstract :

Marriage is a socially approved relationship between man and woman. It binds each other into a permanent, official relationship of husband and wife. It satisfies physical, social, psychological, cultural and economic needs of men and women. Marital harmony and discordance can be made either by the woman or the man or by both of them. The proper understanding of the couples and tolerance make any marriage successful. In this paper the researcher tends to probe into the persona who fractures the familial bond. The external influences may also act as intruders in the split of the family. It also probes into the causes and consequences of fractured families.

Key words: harmony, discordance, fractured, misalliance, familial bond

Marriage is a socially approved relationship between man and woman. It binds each other into a permanent, official relationship of husband and wife. It satisfies physical, social, psychological, cultural and economical needs of men and women. According to ancient scriptures, marriage is regarded as socio- religious

duty constituted to attain three important aims of life- the dharma (duty), rati (sensual pleasure) and praja (progeny). It is also a social identity. Man is considered to be the bread winner of the family and woman, the care taker of the house. Of course she changes 'the house' into 'home'. She must be a better home manager and administrator. Normally in India, arranged marriages are preferred. Due to the intrusion of the Western culture, living together without marital bond also exists in the present scenario. Kapur writes "you cannot tell about a person before marriage, no matter how many times you meet him" (MW 33).

Marital harmony and disharmony can be made either by the woman or the man or by both of them. The proper understanding of the couples and tolerance make any marriage successful. In this paper the researcher tends to probe into the persona who fractures the familial bond. The causes and consequences of dissolution in marriage are also discussed. Shagun in *Custody* and Maya in *Afterwards* are compelled to marry in their late teens to Raman and Govind Warriar respectively. Both the women want to enjoy their lives. Govind is born and brought up in Kerala where patriarchy is strictly practised whereas his wife Maya has studied in Convent school. She is bicultural. Govind, the owner of the Govind Warriar Plumbers in Kerala thinks about his business and forgets to be a good companion to her. Maya does not schmooze freely with her husband Govind but with her foreign neighbour, Rahul Tiwari. Later Govind has explained the board that Maya has been wrong in many things. He further complains about Maya to the board that she thinks, "I had no love for her. It wasn't true. I never stopped loving her" (As 208). Maya never tries to point out her husband's maliciousness to him.

Shagun in *Custody* gets into connubiality happily and leads a happy life in the beginning and in the course of time she mars her marital bond. Raman Kaushik is the Sales Manager of the cool drink company 'The Brand'. Shagun is pretty, charming and admirable. She looks forward to the freedom which marriage will provide. Kapur writes, "she, the beauty, he the one with brilliant prospects." (Cy14). He is punctual to home, buying costly branded chocolates, cakes, cheese and fruits. Whenever he buys a ticket for the film show he includes his mother -in- law, Mrs. Sabharwal in the list. Mrs. Sabharwal speaks of Raman to Shagun as "... so

reliable he is, you will never have to worry about a thing. Your life will be comfortable, secure and safe” (Cy 26). Shagun’s expectations even before marriage and after her marriage are fulfilled by Raman. It is Raman who arranges everything for their marriage in lieu of Mrs. Sabharwal. He helps her in purchasing wedding garments, talks to the caterers, pundits and beat the prices down. Raman is ilk to his mother- in- law, Mrs. Sabharwal but Shagun never cares for her husband’s parents. Yet, he adjusts to live with her. When ‘The Brand’ reenters, Raman is hired for ten lakhs a year. He strives hard to reach his target and often goes abroad and these long hours have widened the lacunae between them. Shagun has been living with him for twelve years and is jaded with the monotonous life. She opines, “I want something else in my life, can’t you understand that? We always meet the same people talk about the same old things over and over. It’s boring” (Cy 46).

The second couple discussed in *Custody* is Ishita and Suryakant. Ishita’s mother –in - law is the main reason for her dissolution of marriage with Suryakant. Ishita loves her husband Suryakant intimately. When her parents ask her to hide the secret of her treatment for tuberculosis to everybody including her husband, she says, “If I can’t trust my husband, it is no marriage” (Cy 61). She considers him as her best friend. She expresses that “she loved him more than life itself” (Cy 61). Ishita says pathetically, “she had thought of her husband’s family as hers, revelling in togetherness, sharing and companionship” (Cy 61).

Shagun perceives that she has been raised up to marry to be a wife, daughter-in –law and a mother. Hence, “a curtain was drawn between her normal life and another secret one, more charged than anything she had previously known” (Cy 26). She falls in love with Ashok Kanna, the boss of her husband. The novelist explains Shagun’s reason for an affair with him as: “When she started her affair she had thought a lover would add to her experience make up for all the things she had missed having married straight out of college. She had heard of other women who took lovers- their whole lives didn’t change” (MW 82). When she is asked to enumerate valid reasons for her divorce in the court, she herself says that there is no witness to prove that he has beaten her or has denied her money or insulted her in public.

Most of the time Maya and Govind are fighting because Govind is suspicious. Raman is kind to Shagun and provides everything to her but she is not loyal to him. To make a marriage successful both the man and the woman need patience, mutual understanding, adjustability, forgetting and pardoning each other's flaws and etc. In most of the families either the husband or the wife or the both cannot be conducive in their marital life and so they find solace by other means. Shagun and Govind Warriar are responsible for the dislocation of their wed lock.

Maya lives like a caged bird without any freedom. She does not have any friend or relative to share her misery of Govind's lovelessness towards her. She pathetically says , “ good looking girl, good family, convent educated... but once he got me, he didn't know what on earth to do with me” (As 56). So she invites Rahul for dinner at home and takes him to Padmanaban palace where she unravels the miseries in her heart to him and pleads him to help her to escape from Govind. Kalpana Sharmal in her article in *India Times* says:

There are times when you meet someone outside the marriage and you instantly feel the connection. It is not a sexual attraction at first but you feel an intense pull towards that person. They are basically souls with whom you have unfinished business. You will experience a constant thirst to be with that person and you won't find peace unless you indulge in that person in some way. (n.p)

She tells Rahul that her husband is more suspicious and possessive and she wants to abscond from him. She requests him to find a job for her in Delhi. He hesitates because he does not want to be the reason for their break up in marriage. When he goes to her house to apologize for his inability to help, Govind notices him coming out of his house in his absence. He gets infuriated and beats her violently and tells her that he is going to destroy her beautiful face which is the cause of all evils. Maya in despair entangles the issue between her and Govind to Rahul. Rahul arranges to hire a taxi and books tickets to Delhi from Trivandrum airport. He can feel that some strange sorrows are hiding behind her graceful façade. His help to flee her from the cage might get him a little benefit too. Suspicion in marriage is like a devil which destroys the rapport of the couples.

The doctor of Ishita has tried to make her pregnant with modern technology of IVF but all her attempts fail. She feels that she is a “non –woman” (Cy 69) as Suryakant doesn’t turn towards her in the bed. She has become a desolate woman. Osho says, “Hindus have been saying that unless a woman becomes a mother, she is not fulfilled” (142). She has decided to leave with dignity for the sake of the love he once has had for her. Madeline Clements writes:

Kapur’s narrative suggests, as a result of SK’s inability to take his wife’s part against his domineering mother. The matriarch’s decision to cut all ties with his daughter-in-law when the treatment fails seems an extension of the untrustworthy kind of maternal ‘care’ offered and quickly withdrawn by similar such-in-laws in Kapur’s earlier fiction.

(21)

The parents usually seek a better alliance for their daughters. Of course most of the parents of the girls are in anxiety till they give away their daughter to a handsome, well earning, and kind groom. In these novels, the draw back in arranged marriages is that they search a groom either of their family status or higher than theirs. They fail to notice the character as well as how far their daughters can adjust. They do not consult a word or ask their opinions of their fiancés or the members of the groom’s family. They want implicit obedience from their daughters. The parents fear that they may love and fall themselves in the trap of the boys in the city. So, they arrange for the visitation of the groom’s family without their consent and give away their daughters in marriage in constraint. Shagun’s mother realizes the necessity of Shagun’s marriage instantly as: Shagun had had an infinite number of unsuitable boys after her- she had needed to ensure her daughter’s safety before the fruit was snatched and a tender life ruined. Raman was the anti dote for every fear (Cy 37).

Govind beholds Maya in a fair in Trivandrum and he is attracted by the beauty of Maya and sends a marriage assembler to her parents. They do not confabulate her and they fail to think whether Govind is a suitable match to her. Again because of the misalliance, her marriage break. Shagun’s mother, Mrs.

Sabharwal being a widow cannot prolong her daughter's marriage so she has not asked her daughter, Shagun's opinion in selecting a groom. She simply arranges her wedding with Raman as he is good looking, and draws handsome salary. Actually Shagun feels that she is made to marry Raman, but she wants to enjoy in her teens without any marital responsibility. During their eleven years of marriage many men dared to cross the boundary line of matrimony. She feels that, "she decided she must have been unhappier than she realized. She had been brought up to marry to be wife, mother and daughter-in-law" (Cy 26). Raman feels that he should have travelled less to keep her with him. He cries, "if there was something wrong, why didn't you tell me? I was working so hard –for whom do I work but my family - and you – "(Cy 88). Their children Arjun and Roo are kicked like balls in the court of the parents. Their visitation rights and custody are decided by their separated parents and the court. After a little struggle Arjun can cope up to the situation but not the three year old Roohi who is torn between her biological mother, Shagun and step mother, Ishita. Because of Shagun the whole family including her mother and in-laws suffer.

In Kapur's *Custody*, Ishita's childhood disease, tuberculosis acts as an intruder and makes her impoverished throughout her life. Her first husband SK listens to his mother in decision making and when they decide for the second marriage of SK, she voluntarily comes out of the family and gives her mutual consent for divorce. Though she fails in her first marriage she finds success in her second marriage with Raman Kaushik. The love for Raman's daughter Roohi makes her life meaningful. Raman also understands her and leaves his son, Arjun to Shagun to claim Roohi for the sake of Ishita. Dr. Rohidas Nitonde says,

for Ishita the custom of arranged marriages seem to be overflowing with wisdom. And she finds joint family as a safe guard against loneliness she might feel. This is how Kapur catches hold of the Indian ethos through her fiction. She is one of the best writers who have explored the complex terrain of joint family (113).

Loneliness, possessiveness, teenage love, suspicion may mar the marital bond. All nuptial problems emerge, when one cannot control his ego. Selfless love and sacrificial nature dissolve many conjugal

problems. The members of the families include children and parents of the spouses. So, the children must also be given enough care and attention. The couples who wish to break their marriage should plan meticulously for the upbringing of their children also.

Works Cited

Kapur, Manju. *Custody*. Random House India, 2011. (Cy)

Misra, Jaisree. *Afterwards*. Penguin Books, 2004. (As)

Clements, Madeline. *Fractured Families* TLS March, 2011 (21).

Gurwara, Simmi. Manju Kapur's *A Married Woman*- An Interrogation of Marital Relationships. *The Atlantic Review*, vol.10 No 4, Oct- Dec 2009 p.88-101.

Nitonde, Rohidas. editor. "*The Immigrant*," *In Search of a Feminist writer*. Penguin Random House, 2014, pp. 89- 106.

Osho. *The Book of Man*. New Delhi : Penguin Books, 2013.

Sharmal, Kalpana. "Why Extra Marital Affairs Could Be Right." *India Times.com.*, N. pag., 6 July 2017. Web. 20 Feb. 2018.