

Tribhuvan University

Assertion of Motherhood in Manju Kapur's *Custody*

A Thesis Submitted to the Central Department of English
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in English

By

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Kirtipur, Kathmandu

April 2017

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Letter of Recommendation

Mr. Nar Bahadur Chaudhary has completed his thesis entitled “Assertion of Motherhood in Manju Kapur’s *Custody*” under my supervision. He carried out his research from 2073/02/12 B.S. to 2073/12/24 B.S. I hereby recommended his thesis be submitted for viva voce.

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Acknowledgements

I would like to express my profound gratitude to Raj Kumar Baral, Lecturer of Central Department of English, for making constant supervision and guiding me with regular inspiration, encouragement, and insightful suggestion throughout the study. His vigorous efforts made me present this research work in this form.

I am also indebted to the Head of the Central Department of English Prof. Dr. Amma Raj Joshi for the valuable directions in conducting the research.

I would like to extend sincere acknowledgement to the entire group of Professors, Readers, Lecturers, and the Teaching Assistants of the Department for their valued inspiration. I would like to express my sincere thanks to my colleagues and all my well-wishers who directly and indirectly helped me to complete this work.

April 2017

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Letter of Approval

This thesis, entitled “Assertion of Motherhood in Manju Kapur’s *Custody*” submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, by Nar Bahadur Chaudhary has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

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Abstract

The main objective of this research is to find out the sense of female manipulation and domination in patriarchal society through the analysis of female character Ishita by using the tool third world feminism. Ishita, the main character of this novel, who is divorced because of her infertility. It also attempts to dramatize the consequences of divorce, alienation, identity crisis and uncertainties of matrimony in this novel. This research focuses as of divorce, broken marriage and remarriage in upper middle class of urban Indian families. The central female characters Ishita, a young Indian girl, who is compelled to divorce due to her infertility. Less sympathy from her mother in laws, rejection instead of love is portrayed in this novel. In his novel motherhood is an institution of patriarchy that insures the control of women by their imprisonment of in domesticity. By observing it this research as an institution of motherhood in patriarchy, where she has to undergo through the stage of isolation, loss of individual identity and sense of alienation, torture. Therefore, Ishita's journey is to assert her motherhood that is complicated by patriarchy.

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I. Representation of Gender Relation in in ManjuKapur's*Custody*

This research focuses on Manju Kapur's *Custody* as of divorce, broken marriage and remarriage in upper middle class of urban Indian families. In particular, it explores the role of women in patriarchal society, where women are treated as other subjects or not as human beings. The central female characters Ishita, a young Indian girl is divorced due to her infertility. Less sympathy from her mother in laws, rejection instead of love is portrayed in this novel. In the novel elements like isolation, loss of individual identity and sense of alienation are portrayed. Ishita's child is plagued with social stigma, emotional exploitation and psychological pressure. Though central character Ishita, exposes the emptiness of marital life where she goes through severe mental torture from her family.

This project uses postcolonial version of feminism by analyzing the female protagonist characters Ishita and Sagun where they find the sense of suffocation, divorce and aftermath consequences of divorce coming from broken family. Adultery, extramarital love and sex freedom are instruments of the resistance to the patriarchal myth and values, which are used by patriarchal society to suppress the women. Since, the focus of the study is to examine third world/ postcolonial issues like broken marriage, alienation, depression, misery, gloominess, sense of failure, quest of liberty and domination through language.

Manju Kapur was born in Amritsar India, who is an Indian novelist. She teaches English at Delhi University under the name Manju Kapur Dalmia. She studied and received an M.A. in 1972 from Dalhousie University in Halifax, Canada, and an M. Phil from Delhi University. She is married to Gun Nidhi Dalmia; they have three children and three grandchildren, and live in New Delhi. She has written five novels: *Difficult Daughters* (1998), *A Married Woman* (2002), *Home* (2006), *The*

Immigrant(2009), and *Custody*(2011). Her first novel *Difficult Daughters*received a great international acclaim. This novel was published in 1998. *Difficult Daughters*was awarded the Commonwealth Writers Prize for the best first book (Eurasia) and was a number one best seller in India. In this novel the protagonist is trying to find a place for her in a world where her life is depicted by familiar duties andbecomes embroiled in a forbidden affair while the seismic upheavals of the partition surround her.

Her second novel *A Married Woman* was called 'fluent and witty' in the *Independent*, while her third, *Home*, was described as 'glistening with detail and emotional acuity' in the *Sunday Times*. Her most recent novel, *The Immigrant*, has been long listed for the DSC Prize for South Asian Literature. Since her first novel, *Difficult Daughters* (1998), has established herself as a chronicler of middle-class Indian manners, even earning comparison with Jane Austen for her sharp-eyed, finely turned portraits of unremarkable lives. *The Immigrant* is her fourth novel. Her starting point, however, is not plot or character, but grand contemporary narratives. At the risk of sounding like a political scientist, *Custody* was inspired by globalization and economic liberalization. As far as most Indian women and children are concerned, a man does. But that's changing.Like so many challenges facing the nation's politicians, the fundamental problem is one of scale: the legal, education and health systems are simply overloaded. Kapur's fiction examines the effect that these almost impossibly vast issues have on the most intimate areas of people's lives: love, sex, work, money, and above all family.

Custody depicts what appears to be an enviably happy and prosperous married couple, Raman and Shagun, who are torn apart by adultery and then by a bitter legal battle for their children. In a story carrying echoes of Ibsen, Shagun chooses love with a westernized Indian businessman over family duty; Raman's desperate bid to gain

custody of his son and daughter is an act born of love, revenge and humiliation. In many respects, Kapur is ideally placed to comment on the seismic shifts shaping the Indian nation. Born in the Punjabi city of Amritsar shortly after independence in 1948, she has spent a lifetime balancing her country's traditions with the demands of its ever-changing present. She is happy to write in English, but admits that the choice remains fraught.

Kapur's fifth novel *Custody* is largely set in thriving upper-middle class colonies of Delhi in the mid-90s against the backdrop of the initial surge of foreign investment in India. The novel presents the uncertainty of matrimony, which cannot be imagined. The central couple just as their troubles begin. Raman is a fast rising marketing executive at a global drinks company. Shagun is his extraordinarily beautiful wife with his glittering future, her vivid beauty, and their two adorable children – eight year old Arjun who looks just like her and two year old Roohi who looks just like him – the pair appears to have everything. Then Shagun meets Raman's dynamic new boss Ashok and everything changes. Once lovers and companions, husband and wife become enemies locked in an ugly legal battle over their two children. Caught in their midst is the childless Ishita who is in love with the idea of motherhood. *Custody* is the riveting story of how family love can disintegrate into an obsession to possess children, body and soul, as well as a chilling critique of the Indian judicial system.

Custody becomes something more than just a social commentary, but a novel that is true to the universal angst of modern marriage, with its burden of individualism. The novel is impressive in its skill and heartrending in its honesty. Kapur's *Custody* has heartstrings twanging away with its wrenching moments and stories of love, loss and betrayal. It's a simple enough cast of characters – people who could be your next-door neighbors, Raman and Shagun seem like the couple who

have everything. He's the hard-working 'good man' who holds a high paying, high pressure marketing job; she's the gorgeous wife who dutifully produces a boy, Arjun, and a girl, Roohi and accompanies him to office parties. In another part of the city is Ishita, whose marriage runs into trouble and finally breaks up when her in-laws realize she can't have children.

Kapur addresses the gendered nature of *Custody* battles in India – men often refuse to grant divorce while women usually have greater claim to the children – but she refuses to generalize or moralize. The legal process is rotten in different ways for both parties. Neither does she spend too long on whether Shagun's infidelity scandalizes society, but focuses on how it affects her characters. The concept of family shame and social propriety is firmly in the background. Shagun in *Custody* portrays as a 'new woman'. Kapur is well established as a thoughtful and entertaining chronicler of the Indian middle classes. Torn between their countries' traditional values and the more Western aspirations that have come with new prosperity, these people are a gift to any novelist – and once again, Kapur takes full advantage. In some ways, the plot here is almost Victorian, as the beautiful Shagun tires of her dependable, unexciting husband Raman and has her head turned by the modern Indian equivalent of the local mill-owner: an executive in a global corporation. Amid the demands and hysterics of the four grown-ups in this tale of broken marriages, the children remain quietly in the background until the novel's second half. It is then that we begin to see the disastrous side-effects of the bitter fight for their custody, the "tyranny of blood", and their trauma, "torn between two mothers, two homes, and two countries".

In *Custody* Kapur depicts the gendered nature of custody which is battled in India. Generally men refuse to grant divorce while women usually have greater claim

to the children but she refuses to do so. Both the parties counsel the legal advice. The battle lines are drawn early and both parties fight to its end. The cycle of rage between Shagun and Raman not only fuels itself but is complicated by the new stepmothers and fathers acquired through second marriages. Kapur is adept at dealing with this complicated family configuration, and the insecurity it brings to the step-parents as well as children. In Ishita's plight, as see the second wife's desperate struggle to replace the biological mother, while Ashok presents a more ambiguous kind of care. Neither does she spend too long on whether Shagun's infidelity scandalizes society, but focuses on how it affects her characters. The concept of family shame and social propriety is firmly in the background.

The primary objective of the study is to analyze how female are manipulated and dominated in patriarchal society. Through the critical analysis of the female character Ishita, who is divorced because of her infertility, this research attempts to dramatize the consequences of divorce, alienation, identity crisis and uncertainties of matrimony. In Kapur's *Custody*, the women protagonist regarded as mother who begot children. In this novel, motherhood is an intuition of patriarchy that insures the control of women by their imprisonment in domesticity. The women who cannot begot children are divorced. The women protagonist Ishita in this novel cannot fulfil the role of mother due to her infertility, as a result she gets divorced.

By observing the research as an institution of motherhood in patriarchy, where the women have to undergo through the stage of misery, alienation, identity crisis, suffering and tortures. Because of infertility women are divorced and exiled from family. Finally, it compels them to go for motherhood and institutionalize it. Different critics have reviewed the text in different ways. Arifa Akbar in *The Independent*, writes about *Custody* in his way:

A marriage preceded or fractured by a heady, socially unacceptable romance has emerged time and again in Manju Kapur's fiction.

Custody: here, the subject is matrimony at its most intolerable followed by the emotional fall-out of a break-up on one wealthy extended Delhi family. The affair sparks the book's furious momentum as it follows them through separation, divorce, re-marriage (Shagan to Ashok; Raman to the infertile) and a crescendo of a custody battle in all its legal chicanery and psychological ugliness. (No. Pag.)

In this above lines Arifa Akbar delineates on battle for custody of the children.

According to him, marriage creates unacceptable romance which comes time and again. The marriage ultimately reaches in the separation, divorce, re-marriage and psychological ugliness. He says that this novel is about not easily accepted by society which is about romance. This novel is also about separation, divorce, and re-marriage.

Another critic Mithu Benerji in *The Guardian* writes:

Kapur's book reveals the unimagined uncertainties of matrimony. The wife's sense of suffocation, the husband's fear of loneliness and the constant shifting of the children, like commodities, from one home to the other, are evoked with painstaking sincerity. Although Marriage is well-trodden territory for Kapur, here her possession of the subject is complete. In the accumulation of detail, and her tone of emotional restraint, *Custody* becomes something more than just a social commentary, but a novel that is true to the universal angst of modern marriage, with its burden of Individualism. (No. Pag.)

In the above abstract Mithu Benerji focuses on suffering of women. This shows that the condition of women was sense of suffocation, the husband's fear of loneliness and the

constant shifting of the children. Although marriage is well-trodden territory her possession of the subject is complete. It talks about that women are under and domination of their husband or male's fear and torture. They are suffering so many kinds of pains. Similarly, Umachandran in *The Times of India* writes:

Custody, here the focus is on the break-up of a marriage and the long-term effects on all the people involved. It's a book about marriage and divorce with children at the heart of it. The women aren't particularly spectacular, ambitious or successful, but what Kapur brings out with sensitivity and perception is the conflict that arises when "traditional Indian values" That women are reared on come in contact with other worlds. (No. Pag.)

In the above lines Umachandra focuses on consequences of broken marriage. Marriage focus the break-up of a marriage and the long-term effects on all the people and divorce with children at the heart of it. The women aren't particularly spectacular, ambitious or successful. This results the negative effect on people and divorce with children. They are suppressed by their own husband. The major responsibility is that she is trapped in motherhood soon after her marriage. Mithu Banerjee writes in a review of *Custody*:

Although marriage is well-trodden territory for Kapur, here her possession of the subject is complete. In the accumulation of detail, and her tone of emotional restraint, *Custody* becomes something more than just a social commentary, but a novel that is true to the universal angst of modern marriage, with its burden of individualism.(4)

India of the 1990s was entering the world economy on a more ambitious footing, and in which the idea of family duty had been overridden by individualism.

Going through these critics view, many of them have raised the issues of suffering of women after divorce, some focus battle for the custody of the children. But any of them didn't examining the factors on motherhood. Although this research makes significant use of concept developed by postcolonial feminist critics but it doesn't offer a comprehensive analysis of postcolonial literary theory. Rather it analyzes main female characters sufferings, identity crisis and gloominess by patriarchal myths and norms. Since the major objective of the study is to demonstrate the character Ishita's suffering due to the manipulation and domination of patriarchal society in Kapur's *Custody*.

The researcher makes use of the theory of third world feminism to examine the issue of female characters and their struggles for freedom. Third World Feminism has been described as group of feminist theories developed by feminists of the third world. They acquire their views and took part in feminist politics. Chandra Talpade Mohanty, in her work *Under the Western Eyes*, criticizes western feminism on the grounds that it is ethnocentric and doesn't take into account the unique experience of women from Third World societies. Mohanty uses the term 'third world' interchangeably with "women of color". She argues:

What seems to constitute women of color or Third World women as a viable oppositional alliance is a common context of struggle rather than color or racial identifications. Similarly, it is Third World women's oppositional political relation to sexist, racist and imperialistic structures that constitutes our political commonality. (7)

As a theorist, Mohanty especially focuses on western feminist discourse on women in the Third World. She presents the critique pertaining to Third World scholars' writing about their own cultures. Such writing employs identical analytic strategies.

Moreover, she focuses upon the production of the Third World women as a singular monolithic subject.

The issues of discrimination faced by the third world women are sexual division labor, the family, the marriage, race, ethnicity, household, patriarchy. Third world feminist, Uma Narayan, argues that issue of women of the third world is universalized and generalized by western feminist. Uma Narayan makes the following point:

Forms of violence against third world women are dowry, murders, domestic violence, and stigmatization. Psychological harassment and mistreatment of daughter-in-law are fairly commonplace issues.

Problem of dowry related harassment of women, police rape of women in custody, issues relating to women poverty, work, health and reproduction and issues of ecology and communalism are some of the burgeoning challenges faced by the women of the third world. (1-13)

Third world women suffer from injustice and exploitation physically, sexually, psychologically. Viable issues addressed by women's group are the issues of dowry murder, rape, and especially police rape of poor women in custody. In many societies, the issues of dowry turn in to murders. A numbers of women's group address wife beating in the context of male drinking alcohol. The issues of dowry murders are hardly the only issues pretending to violence against women's movement.

Feminist Sara Suleri observes that the Third World Feminist discourse is embedded with the questions of identity formation. This view leads to the debates between essentialism and conversation. It also addresses the distinctions between situated and universal knowledge. Suleri defines Third World Feminism in *Women Skin Deep* as:

Still prepared to grant an uneasy selfhood to voice is that is best described as the property of postcolonial women whether this voice represents perspectives as divergent as the African American, or the post-colonial culture location, its imbrications of race and gender are accorded an iconicity that altogether too good to be true. (758)

Suleri's concept of overlapping is very much fascinating. The creation of icon through the imbrications of race and gender is the third world women's identity. In this hybrid space, there is the formation of identity. It is arranged in an overlapping manner in which there is a chance of subsuming western notion.

In such context, we see Third World Feminism as radical feminism, which provides an alternative perspective representing different disparate cultural ethnic realities. That is why; it is an inclusive activity to raise the different socio-cultural realities of the then marginalized Third World Women.

Focusing on the theme of female identity particularly in India, the critic Rahul Gairolasays as:

Women identity has great use-value in the schema of gendered society but little exchange-value. Since gender can never fully be exchanged or reach a point where it establishes an equivalence with another fact of identity as rooted so deeply within both the self and society(subjectively and agency). Any exchange at all occurs within the gendered subject, who scrambles to compromise her own identity; the bartering of gender roles and other facts of identity is thus an individual, internal, symbolic act never uninformed by the surrounding societ. (308)

Gairola has mentioned here about the women identity in a gendered society.

According to Gairola, women identity can be gained by doing exchange of gendered roles having the knowledge of surroundings. In a gendered society, a third world woman always searches her new identity which is equivalent to the man.

This thesis is divided into three chapters where the first chapter gives general introduction with some critics' views on the text. Similarly, the second chapter Textual Analysis merges both theoretical aspects and textual aspects. Finally, the third chapter is conclusion that provides summary of the research and closes the thesis.

II. Assertion of Motherhood in Manju Kapur's *Custody*

This novel *Custody* portrays the conflict between the parents for the possession of their children and the ways in which modern Indian women aspire for independence. It deals with both Indian and universal context. In the post-colonial era freedom and liberty was carried in to our country and it was also disseminated by western education. The woman novelists were liable for the new picture of woman inundated against the repressive social customs of the male governed society.

The novel vividly narrates the sorrows and assures of two women characters, Shagun and Ishita, and their various efforts to achieve fulfillment. Shagun the protagonist of the novel is bold enough to choose a good lifestyle in order to create her own space in the world, fearing no one. She is a middle class woman, the wife of Raman, a corporate advertiser. Feeling bored, alienated and attracted towards modernity, Shagun the mother of two children, develops an extra marital affair with Ashok Khanna, Raman's more charismatic boss and hot shot sales executive. Since her teens, Shagun had an infinite number of boys and she was looking forward to the freedom marriage would provide.

This novel represents two conflicting feature of female embodiment, betrayal and examines how woman has started to cultivate as an individual and the main core of conflict for her turns into the association of marriage which has so far forms the restrictions of her liberty. Shagun the character in *Custody* reflects that woman now has stimulated to the core and has become a vital part in the society. It demonstrates illicit relationship between Shagun and her husband's boss Ashok Khanna who uses this sexual freedom as an instrument of resistance to patriarchal myths and values. This novel also depicts a female character Shagun who rejoicing her sexuality and appropriates its generative belief through a consciousness of patriarchal principles.

Her sexuality is a dome of happiness and outfit in which she is empowered to employ her body for herself. She defies the male subjugated and patriarchal system of observation and control. She convenes Ashok Khanna, a business man who is attracted by her beauty.

The researcher makes use of the theory of third world feminism and African feminism. The third world feminism contextualizes the spirit of the first world feminism within the third worlds' socio-cultural circumstances. A third world woman is taken as the subject of prestige too. If she does her marriage according to her choice, it is taken as the destruction of the family reputation. Here a third world woman becomes the victim of religion too. Nothing happens positively with her in patriarchy. Her wants, desires, fears and humor are controlled. Commenting on the theme of such social injustice and struggles of women, Mohanty in her work *Feminism without Borders*, recognizes a deep belief in the power and significance of Third World Feminist thinking. She writes:

What surprised and moved me most as I listened to women in such a very different culture setting was the striking commonality- whether they were educated or illiterate, urban or rural- of their most basic values, the importance they assign to family dignity, and service to others. The claims and counterclaims of mainstream feminism must be put into application. (155)

Mohanty has emphasized an enterprise and a project that embodies the male practice for the third world females. According to Mohanty, she becomes very much shocked to the tendencies of taking female as family dignity. Female, in patriarchy, are only for doing service to others though they are educated or illiterate, urban or rural. If it is contextualized to Ishita, she is an educated girl, but she is going to be married for the

family's reputation only. Patriarchy does not allow her to move her life according to her will and desire. This is the true picture of women living in the third world countries.

Raman and Shagun wedding is set with this standard lines, "...she the beauty, he the one with brilliant prospects" (14). The instant pregnancy makes her the center of all attention, and as a respectful daughter-in-law she is given birth to the boy baby. "Her son had inherited her looks and colour, a further source of gratification." (15). However things get changed when she gives birth to her daughter, that she was not prepared mentally and physically. Besides, "Roohi, her daughter is a carbon copy of her father (18).

In contrast, Ishita inspires of her inability to give birth to a child, maintains always that everything should be shared with her husband Suryakanta. Whereas Shagun tries hard to screen things from her husband. Her excitement and passion for Ashok leads Shagun to that head on collision between desire and duty. She feels annoyed because she has to be "constantly vigilant, continuously invent excuses, convincingly justify absences from home, phone calls even a preoccupied expression" (35). According to Shagun love with Ashok is an experience to fulfill all her unfulfilled desires of her college days. Ishita went to hospital to diagnose her problem of infertility. Ishita shove from healer to seer, herbalist to hospital restlessly looking for some decision, obsessed with optimism, doubt and desolation. So, the greatest component of her infancy is shattered in the chase to accomplish motherhood. Her infertile issue makes in her marriage with snowed under her anxiety, social disgrace emotional abuse and psychological stress. Ishita feels that her happy life is going to end:

Ishita was the dear daughter-in-law in the past. Now she was treated as undeserving and infertile. In the hospital she feels that, Smaller than the ants on the ground, smaller than the motes of the dust in the sunlit air, smaller than the drops of dew caught between blades of grass in the morning, was Ishita sat in the gynecologist's office with her mother-in-law, watching as the doctor sketched out the messages concealed in her body. (65)

The novel *Custody* describes the reality that in a conventional society woman faces disgrace due to her infertile body. Suryakanta is ready to give her divorce who was once did not live without her for a second, meanwhile Ishita thrown out from her in-law house. She undergoes with ethereal as she is penalized for her imperfect body.

According to Simone de Beauvoir, the woman is “defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute she is the Other”(10). Man always thinks that he is in the right, while woman is in the wrong; all the negative qualities are assigned to her. He is afraid of feminine competition. De Beauvoir discusses about the topics like sexual initiation, sexual pleasure for women. She states that woman is not a free agent in choosing the man of her erotic destiny. Man is never consistent; he wants his wife to be passionate with him but indifferent to other men as a whole. He wants her to be entirely his. Thus, she is betrayed from the day he marries her. Bound to one man, with children to tend, woman's life is over. She finds no future other than of her husband's. De Beauvoir says that the bond between man and woman should be based on common love and consent. She also deals with different issues such as unwanted motherhood, the unmarried mother and abortion. She concludes that women should be freed from the bonds of slavery.

This novel *Custody* is not only about infertility but also the issue of divorce, dichotomy of modern society, and relationship between parents and child and aspire for freedom also. It is entirely representation of Indian Modern woman, who tiled new path in the peripheral world. She demonstrates the new woman is rising in modern Indian society. This novel shows that woman should make an effort to realize and detain herself as a human being and not just as an attachment to some male life. *Custody* discloses the deviations, modernity is leading in our society, and the hollowness of modern life. It also exposes the life of Metropolitan cities where people have become the victims of modernity.

Shagun is easily trapped in a relationship with Ashok, who is smart enough to manipulate people and get the best out of them, "Ashok's reputation was based on his ability to get the best out of people" (9). Raman travels a lot and stays away from home for many days on his job duty which leads Shagun to feel tired and homesick. It is boring for her to stay alone to look after the children when Raman is not at home. In such circumstances, she is attracted to the dashing looks of foreign returned Ashok and his flirting statements. He is appointed at the Brand where Raman has already been working for many years. He also gets attracted towards Shagun because of her extraordinary beauty. They fall in love with each other. Subsequently, when Ashok offers her to act as a model in and for the Brand, she agrees hastily, with a hope that it may offer her a chance to be a model and fulfil her dream. Thus Ashok, too much marveled by Shagun's looks, begins executing his plan of wooing her:

Within a few months of arriving in India he saw the woman he knew he had been destined for. In her colouring, her greenish eyes and her demeanour, she was a perfect blend of East and West. A woman so pretty had to be married; besides, she had the look of someone who

never had to compete for male attention. To woo her would thus be that much more difficult: he must first create a need before he could fulfill it. But he was used to creating needs; it was what he did for a living. (4)

Shagun starts the affair with Ashok just to add adventure to her monotonous life, but is dragged more and more into it. He desires to own her from the day he meets her. As soon as he possessed her, this strange hiatus in his life would be over.

Probing the issue of the third world woman's freedom from restrictive measures of patriarchy, Mohanty has strongly criticized such type of ideology in her renowned work *Feminism without Borders* as:

Physical violence against women is thus carried out with an astonishing consensus among men in the world. Women are defined consistently as the victim of male control- as the sexually oppressed. Although it is true that the potential of male violence against women circumstances and elucidates their social position to a certain extent, defining women as archetypal victims freezes them into objects-who-defend-themselves, men into subjects-who-perpetrate-violence. (24)

Mohanty has strongly raised the voice against patriarchy in the above mentioned paragraph. It has become an astonishing consensus created by men for the physical violence like rape and sexual assault against women in the patriarchy. The male dominated society does not take care about the desires of female. Though women have no sexual desire and men have, women should be ready for the men's demands. Rather women are defined as powerless object to defend the chauvinism of male who are taken as the powerful object to commit violence against women. This is the bitter experience of the third world women.

Shagun had never thought of divorcing Raman or leaving her children to marry Ashok. "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"(82). But Ashok, smart enough to manipulate people in his life as well as in his job, is determined to marry Shagun and take her with him when posted in New York. Shagun denies "Don't bother you will finish and go I have to stay for my children"(81). Ashok persuades her:

Things are moving as fast as it is. Ten years ago you couldn't get a cake, pizza or burger here. There wasn't even colour TV for fuck's sake. And now? Everything. What has colour TV got to do with my marriage?"she asked, lips trembling. Ashok was always seeing connections where none were obvious to her. 'Traditional versus modern values, individual versus society, " he elaborated, putting a contrite arm around her. I just want to take you away from here. This narrow social set-up all you know, that's why you are afraid. But it will be fine, fine. Trust me, darling. (81)

The above lines tenderly mocks upon the gender biased people about the birth of a baby boy in India. A son is considered to be the heir of the family, whereas daughter is taken as a burden. Shagun gets a significant status by giving birth to a baby boy "The birth of a boy added to her glory. She had gotten over the duties of heir producing smoothly, there would be no need to have another child" (15). It's a bitter fact of our Indian society; when a son is born the need for daughter is not felt about, when a daughter is born people keep trying until they are blessed with a son. Hemant insists Astha for keeping on trying till the time they are blessed with a son.

Women identity has great use-value in the schema of gendered society but little exchange-value. Focusing on the theme of female identity particularly in India, the critic Rahul Gairola says as:

Since gender can never fully be exchanged or reach a point where it establishes an equivalence with another act of identity as rooted so deeply within both the self and society (subjectively and agency). Any exchange at all occurs within the gendered subject, who scrambles to compromise her own identity; the bartering of gender roles and other facts of identity is thus an individual, internal, symbolic act never uninformed by the surrounding society. (308)

Gairola has mentioned here about the women identity in a gendered society.

According to Gairola, women identity can be gained by doing exchange of gendered roles having the knowledge of surroundings. In a gendered society, a third world woman always searches her new identity which is equivalent to the man.

Shagun is manipulated, though she wants to get back to her wedding. She is trapped in circumstances and her whole life changes because of her single wrong decision. She tries to break up her affair with Ashok-“She had to say good bye in a way that wouldn’t hurt him, then go to her life with Raman” (106). But the intensity of her love drags her towards him to the extent of forgetting her guilt and deciding to divorce Raman. When Shagun visits Raman in the hospital, she feels guilty of spoiling his life. Raman wants her to come back to her life, as he is ready to forgive and forget everything. Shagun realizes her mistake for a moment, but knows she has gone forth and cannot return. The following line shows:

That evening Shagun walked slowly to the colony Park. She needed to be away from the house, it was too full of her husband. Raman must

have struggled to forgive her, how many men would have been so generous? Ashok did not have this gentle, forgiving streak, he would rather kill both her and himself before he let her go. She was a fool for preferring him, a fool. One day she would be punished. (104)

The above lines interpret the bargaining of children for the sake of divorce and constant shifting of the children like commodities. Ashok suggests Shagun to bring the kids with her, and bargain divorce from Raman in exchange of her kids. Shagun says “Don’t make this harder. I have left you the best part of the marriage. Surely my freedom is not too much to ask in exchange”(109)? Raman denies a divorce with a hope of saving his marriage. Shagun kidnaps her ten years old son, Arjun, and two years old daughter, Roohi, for the sake of getting a divorce. Raman is shocked to know the whole incident “The fight was on, and any means was fair”(111). Shagun desires to live her life with freedom and in her own manner. Jaidev explains in the article *Problematizing Feminism*:

Indeed, any sophisticated system today operates not by a direct and visible exploitation of people but by making them retain an illusion of freedom and free choice, by making them willingly give into its imperatives, and by subtly ensuring that they do not see that they are dupes or victims. (5)

It describes the inconsistency of relations through the incidents narrated in the novel. For getting his kids back, Raman can go to whatever extent, thus he files the lawsuit according to Nandan’s instructions. Raman feels brave and buoyant “Let Shagun see he too could fight back, that he was no longer Mr. Nice Guy” (126). Nandan makes it clear that the case may go for a long period, but at least he will have visitation rights after filing the case and he will be able to meet and pass time with his children.

A court notice is sent to Shagun on her mother's address. Manju Kapur also explores how people vary in different circumstances. Shagun's mother who loved Raman as her own son, behaves as if he is an enemy:

Her daughter was not to be cowed into anxiety. Taking the children had been Ashok's idea, if only to bring Raman to the bargaining table. She had asked nicely for a divorce, been prepared to sacrifice, but the man refused to admit the marriage was over, slammed the phone down on her, what other choice did she have?(141)

Divorce badly affects children's psyche and future either they are young kids or grownups. Arjun stops going to school, because for him, it is shameful that his mother is a divorcee and he is the kind of a single parent. He sees other children, enjoying their holidays, arriving to school functions or going for outing with both their mother and father.

When Roohi questions about the court notice, Shagun tells her "It is a little message from your father. He is trying to kill me"(144). Shagun's intention is to give an unpleasant and bad feedback against Raman. She says- "You must never see him, or go to him even if he calls you. He is a bad, bad man"(144). Throughout the novel, the sufferings and exploitation of children, which arise because of their parents' decisions. An increased rate of depression is noticed in the children, separated from their parents, because of marital problems and divorce. The children of divorced parents suffer more psychological problems than the children whose parents are not dissociated. It is not sure how far these problems precede the divorce and are related to disharmony between the parents or to the conduct of one or both parents that contributed to the conclusion of divorce.

Through Arjun, the writer depicts the side-effects of divorce on the mind and the body of the children. The separation of parents affects Arjun's life. Arjun starts complaining about his stomach pain, leg pain and refuses to go to school. His performance also falls in school, though he has perpetually been a superb student, but at present he is faring poorly in his academics. Shagun holds Raman responsible for all the suffering of her kids:

Of course it was the recent disturbances that were causing her son stress. If only Raman could see things rationally, there was no reason why they both couldn't continue as joint careers of their children. They had been so delighted when she came to get them, throwing themselves on her with hugs and kisses. That scene had replayed itself in her heart many times, even though it had been a little spoiled by Arjun's assumption that she had come to stay. No she had to explain, they were all leaving papa, they would never stop loving him of course but things had changed and living together was out of the question. Some day he would understand. Now would he please be a good boy and help her pack his stuff? (145)

Raman used to teach Arjun for his class test and examinations. Shagun forgets the timetable of Arjun's test because of so many incidents happening in her life. Arjun. Arjun's behavior changes badly, he forges his mother's signature on his test papers, pinches Roohi whenever he wants his mother's care. He knows if Roohi cries, his mother will come to their room. Arjun is jealous of Ashok because he completely possesses Shagun's attention. Arjun's behavior hurts Shagun, she knows the reason but she can't help him with that. Arjun has to learn to live without Raman. According to Simone de Beauvoir:

One is not born, but rather becomes a woman. No biological, psychological or economic fate determines the figure that the human female presents in society; it is civilization as a whole that produces this creature, intermediate between male and eunuch, which is described as feminine. (2)

According to her, women are considered secondary in relation to men from the ancient time. It is not necessity of feminine feature but it is the result of education and social tradition under the control of men. Women's dignity failed but they stand on the same ground of intellectual and professional equality. This has given rise to social evils also.

Ashok suggests Shagun to send Arjun to boarding school for a change of environment. Shagun is hurt about everything Ashok says about Arjun- "She understood he could never feel for the boy, it was her fault for leaving the child's father, she would pay for her sins for the rest of her life"(171). She tries in every possible way to convince Arjun to attend his classes, but he is determined not to change his mind. Eventually Shagun considers the option, Ashok has suggested her, and conveys her son about sending him to Dehradun Public Academy boarding school. Arjun shows no interest in any suggestion, related to his studies and school.

Arjun turned his head away. She stared at his back Ashok had said, don't push, just drop the idea in his head, this is not going to work if he doesn't want to go. And leave him alone, don't entertain him, don't mollycoddle him. Someone else was determining, directing, and deciding. It felt strange but her own method had failed. (172)

The idea looks like a sound one to Arjun of going to a place where no one will know his parents' separation; where he will not suffer to read pity and curiosity in the eyes of people around him and tolerate to avoid friends. But he is also insecure to leave

his mother in Delhi with Ashok. “He was afraid of leaving his mother with that man”(173). Though Shagun behaves as the shifting from Raman Kaushik’s life to Ashok Khanna’s is as natural as changing clothes, but Arjun is not comfortable living with Ashok, a stranger who rarely talks to him and agrees to prepare for entrance exam.

The separation of parents also affects Roohi, who starts sucking her thumb and wetting the bed at night. Shagun very well knows the reason behind the changes in her daughter’s life, but is helpless. “In all the recent upheavals, let the thumb at least be constant”(254).Roohi is sent with Raman according to the deal and Shagun is free to go to New York to stay with Ashok.

This novel emphasizes on the weary judicial system of India through the custody of two young children. Raman contacts Nandan (Raman’s cousin) to look for advice about his kidnapped children by their own mother. He suggests filing a strong custody case against Shagun-“We need as much evidences as you have, diaries, letters, witnesses, that will prove she is an unfit mother exposing the children to nefarious influences”(122). Raman finds the whole process disgusting why do I have to say all this? Half of it is not even true”(123). Raman is unwilling to reveal his personal life publicly, but for the sake of his children’s custody, he proceeds. Nandan tells him that courts work like this in India. If an agreement is not in the picture, he has to fight “initially they all wanted to fight. He had seen it happen time and again. Fight, despair, compromise. The courts defeated everybody cases like this could take years, but clients need to be disillusioned slowly(123).Shagun also files a divorce case against Raman because she has to go abroad with Ashok, she needs to be divorced first to get a visa as Ashok’s wife.

If those who are entrusted with authority fall victims to their own profession slothfulness, frustration and lethargy, are not they susceptible to abusing state power? If state power and vested authority are abused and if no efforts are taken to stop it, is not the reign of terror can start? The following extract illustrates the point:

The problem, he said, absent mindedly snapping a carrot into bits, is to go there had to be a replacement. It would be impossible for the office to manage without so valuable an officer. The answer was, obviously, a replacement. He had already looked at the service lists and decided upon a suitable replacement. (288)

This extract reveals how a sort of the network of power functioned in the wing of administrative institution. Amidst all the workers within the police department nobody has had the genuine concern for justice and equity.

Nobody is ready to handle the troublesome public event and affairs in a dutiful way. They were hungry for their own self-centric betterment. Badran uses the terms Islamic feminists and Iranian feminists interchangeably. Her additional view is cited for the sake of better illustration:

Given the current situation and the historical relations between the state and the clergy in Iran, many secular feminists have come to realize that even if Iran is secularized, the clergy will always cling to some power. Therefore, some secular feminists support dynamic ijtehad. (12)

Linking dynamic ijtehad to secular feminists of Iran does not embrace reforming religion or building a feminist consciousness. It also views religion as static, dogmatic and ontologically misogynist.

If sectors of settler society ostracized her because they doubted her loyalty to the British Crown, Blixen, for her part, kept aloof from the small settlers, the shopkeepers and the clerks of empire. Property-as an expression of spirit-was:

She scraped together a sense of belonging by holding to an aristocratic idea of Africa, with her farm, elevated in altitude and spirit, as the distilled essence of that idea. Her coffee estate was a financial calamity partly through ill luck, but also, it must be said, because she was at heart a good aristocrat and a poor entrepreneur”(115).

Female activists claim that, just like Jewish and Christian feminisms, “Islamic feminism as a name is more appropriate when used and conceived of as an analytical concept in feminist research and feminist theology.

Feminisms' theoretical and political grounds can be explained in three points according to Tohidi, Islamic feminism can be seen as responding to traditional patriarchy sanctioned by religious authorities. It is possible to argue that modernity essentially is inseparable from patriarchy. Islamic feminism may serve the Islamization of feminism. Islamic feminists can serve as agents of the modernization and secularization of Islamic societies and states.

Raman informs Nandan about Arjun who is leaving VV, one of the best schools in Delhi and going to DPA, a boarding school. Nandan enquires whether Arjun is willing to go, but how can Raman explain-“How to explain to Nandan the variations of his son’s breath, the quality of his silence, the visual image of a frightened eleven-year-old getting in touch with his father after many months” (204).Nandan suggests Raman to file a stay order against removal but Raman doesn’t want to drag Arjun in any uncomfortable situation, so he refuses to do so. “That was the trouble with Raman. He lacked the killer instinct. Are you want the child, you

have to assert such things” (204). But Raman is too sensitive about his children to expose them to any odd situation.

To develop a bonding between Ashok and Arjun, Shagun insists Ashok to help Arjun in preparing for the entrance test and also to share some moments of Ashok’s DPA years. Ashok seems uncomprehending-“Once he laughed and said, give me time. I’m not an instant father, you know”(212). His only concern is Shagun and not the kids which hurts Shagun.

Raman files a case against Shagun for sending Arjun to DPA with a complaint that Shagun wants to keep the child away from his father. Shagun, determined to send Arjun to DPA, manipulates him -“He had to tell the judge he hated, VV, she had a letter from school to prove that he hadn’t been attending for months”(213). She prepares Arjun for the questions he may be asked in court.

Above all, no information about their private life. Nothing about uncle. Officially they stayed with Naani in Alaknanda. The court did not understand that people could change, no, they had to go on living with the same person till they died. They had the power to take away her children, put her in jail. This was a very hypocritical country narrow-minded and censorious. The judge would probably ask him who he wanted to live with. In this unfair system, fathers had greater rights over male children so he had to say very, very clearly he wanted to live with his mother, and even then they would consider, though it was so obvious that he was part of her, he looked like her, and everybody said so.(213)

Raman gets hurt to realize the ignorance of his own son. He knows that all this is because of the manipulation and deviousness of Shagun. She wants to send Arjun

permanently away from Raman to take revenge because of his denial of divorce. Ashok has stolen the essence of his family and Raman hates Ashok for this, as well as Shagun.

Raman has always been a good father and thus he is granted visitation rights by the court. Raman is partially relieved that he at least can meet his children on weekends. Moving from one home to another is ok for Roohi because she is too small to understand anything but for Arjun it creates more trouble.

That night again he dreamt of a large playing field this time he was running in circles, sweat dripping from his body. All around him were impenetrable hedger, and beyond those were boundary walls with iron-barred gates, guarded by men in sentry-type kiosks, Arjun was smart enough to see that he dreamt when he was troubled by his parents, and this disturbed him. No one he knew dreamt, but then no one he knew had separated parents. His father, nothing his pale morning face, asked him what the matter was, but he couldn't say. He didn't trust his father to understand anything in his new life. (224)

Shagun has to go abroad with Ashok and a divorce is must for her. Raman can't believe her after her betrayal. She kidnapped the children once, she can do that again and take them abroad and never return.

Shagun is frustrated by Raman's such attitude and sends a message through her mother that Roohi is ill and can't see him on weekend. This novel points out one more feature of corruption in India "They both knew medical certificate was not worth the paper it was on, any quack doctor would sell you one." (243) For three weeks he has been sent the same message. Roohi makes Raman's life complete and he can't live without seeing her anymore. Eventually he has to agree to a divorce by

mutual consent and then he will be provided the custody of children but still Shagun will have visitation rights because she is their biological mother. Shagun leaves all the property claims and returns all the jewellery because she only wants a divorce, nothing else. This way the divorce papers are signed and both of them are free to marry anyone they like.

From various sides women fall prey to plenty of things. They themselves are unknown about how they are hoodwinked. The accessing to power of women as a group is sufficient to dismantle the existing organization of relation. This is the general assumptions of women. About this power formation in the third world, Mohanty says:

Women are powerless, unified groups. If the struggle for a just society is seen in terms of the move from powerlessness to power for women as a group, and this is the implication in feminist discourse that structures sexual difference in terms of the division between the sexes, then the new society would be structurally identical to the existing organization of power relations. (39)

Mohanty shows here the distinctions between powerful men and the powerless women in the patriarchy. To have the fine journey from the powerlessness to the powerfulness, all women should be united. Only then the formation of new society can be succeeded.

The analysis of Ishita's life is an attempt to illuminate questions related to woman's quest for identity, self-fulfilment and her path towards autonomy. This novel relates the life of two women of the same generation, but having totally different lives and viewpoints. Ishita has to face rejection because of her infertility, while Shagun is accustomed to love and appreciation. Ishita's parents are neighbours

to Raman's parents; Mrs. Kaushik likes Ishita for her sweet behaviour. Though Ishita is not much beautiful, but she possesses a beautiful smile with lovely even teeth. After completing her BA. Her parents decide she should do a B. Ed-“If she got a job in a government school, she will have security, a steady income as well as lighter hours at work, that future matrimony demanded”(52). Ishita wants to settle in a job before she gets married-“Marriage was far from Ishita's thoughts. She knew it lay in her future but she wanted to work first”(52). Therefore, when she finishes her B.Ed., she applies for teaching job. But at the same time, her parents find a proposal of marriage very suitable for their loving daughter.

It also exposes the blind religious beliefs of Indian society that lead to starving and suffering of a woman. Ishita obeys her mother-in-law's instructions without any question as her mother has suggested her. She “fasts on Tuesdays” (56) and does “the special jap 108 times a day” (56). Kapur also narrates the incident of God's drinking milk all over India. Eventually, all the temples are crowded with devotees to offer milk to God and in return demand to meet their desires. Ishita's mother informs her about this miracle and Ishita also goes to offer milk to God. But nothing helps her to conceive.

Suryakanta tells his mother about the meeting with doctor “Papa and Mummy will know what to do.” Ishita is too much depressed because of her body which has let her down in this most basic function. She can't dare to face anyone after the whole incident. She has not expected such response from Suryakanta who pretends to be very caring:

Oh how far from the truth. At that moment Ishita thought it easier to commit suicide than to live. From the day of her wedding she had thought of this family as hers reveling in the togetherness, sharing and

companionship. Now instead of love all around her, there would be rejection. (63)

On her next visit to the doctor, Ishita's mother-in-law goes with her instead of Suryakanta, because she wants to know what exactly the problem is and what the remedy is. On the way to the doctor, her mother-in-law scans her HSG report and medical papers. They don't talk about anything on the way. When they reach the hospital, the nurse calls them inside the doctor's chamber:

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 with her mother in-law, watching as the doctor sketched out the messages concealed in her body. Here were the tubes, here the eggs, here was where conception occurred. The loss of normal anatomy meant fertilization couldn't take place without intervention. (65)

The doctor suggests Ishita either to go for IUI i.e. intrauterine insemination, or IVF, fertilization that take place in a culture medium outside the body, with egg and sperm extracted from respective donors. Ishita's in-laws decide to go for an IVF treatment, but even after two trials Ishita is unable to conceive.

After two trials her mother-in-law gives up trying any more-"The doctor might have told her that repeated attempts don't increase the chances of success"(68).Ishita wonders that if there has been something wrong with Suryakanta then also her mother-in-law has given up so easily-"They would have moved heaven and earth to get a sons defect corrected" (68). But for daughter-in-law, they are not much concerned, instead they are now trying to get rid of her "It didn't take long for the loving atmosphere around Ishita to grow so thin that it becomes hard for her to

breathe. Was it possible for them all to changetowards her, SK, Chandra Kanta and Tarakanta? Hadn't they valued her for herself"(68)?

Divorce affects the couple economically, mentally, emotionally, and physically. It also acts upon the current and future relationships of the couple. Studies show that divorced individuals exhibit higher degrees of depression and anxiety than the people who are married, and those divorced also tend to have poorer self-concepts and display more symptoms of psychological hurt. Relationships and social networks are determined in various ways by divorce. Divorced individuals generally have more social isolation and have smaller social networks than do married persons. This is explained in terms of them having less in common with married friends, following divorce.

Mr. Rajora usually finds her daughter in bed in her grief. He tries to console her that brooding is not good for anyone. And she should think about some job. Angrily she answers "I wanted to work, you got me married"(129). Realizing his mistake, Ishita's father feels guilty of spoiling his daughter's life by marrying her at a very early age:

Head buried in the pillow, she thought of the body that had known so much love, and then so much punishment. Stubbornly it had remained barren despite the many spent, the hormones, the injections, the painful procedures. She couldn't conceive, whereupon SK had decided he could not love her. If only she could tear out her whole reproductive system and throw it on the road. She hated her body, hated it. Everybody in the building must know why she had come back. Return to sender. Receipt for 5 lakhs attached. (127)

Gradually Ishita tries to get over her grief and move on and face the world with her truth. Mrs. Hingorani, her neighbor, offers her to work in her school and teach the slum children. Ishita's mother suggests her not to waste her qualification on such places and find any better job which can help her financially. But Ishita decides to teach the slum children. Mrs. Rajora fears that it may expose her to different infections, and insists Ishita to look for another job. Julia Kristeva suggests,

A third space for feminism to operate the space which deconstructs all identity, all binary oppositions. But again, in deconstructing patriarchal metaphysics, the risk of deconstructing the very logic that sustains the two forms of feminism of sameness and difference cannot be avoided.

And so the three 'spaces' of feminism are logically and often strategically incompatible.(7)

Ishita wants to move on in her life and she finds it suitable to be with so many children because she can never have one of her own. She wants a life with some purpose, so she starts teaching in Mrs. Hingorani's school. "A drop of ink gets lost in a bucket of water, and here in the bucket of Mandavali her grief receded"(135).

During PTA meetings Ishita meets those poor women, battling a thousand needs with empty stomach, drunken husbands, semi-literate children, with no chance of escape from their poverty. Working with Mrs. Hingorani and her NGO fills Ishita with confidence. Her father feels proud to look at the brightness of her face:

Ishita along with Mrs. Hingorani marching to Parliament House to protest the nuclear device tested in the Pakharan desert. Drawing parallels between herself and the woman involved in the freedom struggle: they too had courted arrest. Contradicting her father, no it was not necessary for India to assert herself as a world power, not

when she couldn't feed her children, making the man think his daughter had grown more in the NGO than in her years of marriage.

(136)

Ishita gets a purpose in her life, but still her parents wish to find a good match for their daughter to secure her future. But Ishita is no more interested in marriage. She wants to focus on her work and help the poor children.

Ishita joins Jeevan, an NGO which works for poor and slum people. Her mother is in search of a suitable groom for her daughter to look after her, but Ishita already has enough of the marriage business, "I can look after myself. You think all the married women have their husbands caring for them. Look round you"(176).

Mrs. Rajora finds a divorced IPS officer, with two kids. Because Ishita can't produce children she has to marry a man who already has children. Mrs. Rajora requests Ishita not to talk too much but Mr. Rajora can't support his wife's request "Mr. Rajora thought of his first encounter with his own bride, and how he had to strain to hear the few words that had barely passed her lips. How much had India really changed, that a silent woman was still considered more desirable"(176)?

Ishita doesn't find the suitor interesting and refuses to marry him. And even a lonely life is the consequence. She can rather be lonely instead of marrying such person who can't even let her go anywhere without him. If he can't trust her then there is no point of marrying him. Mrs. Hingorani suggests Ishita to adopt a child to fulfil her monotonous life and also introduces her to a couple who has just adopted a child. Ishita finds the mother, beaming with happiness instead of being punished for her barrenness like Ishita "Her husband instead of looking for a new wife was content to beam with her"(182). Ishita thinks about herself, how she has been divorced just because she can't produce children as if she is not human being but only a child

producing machine. She desires “May be she and SK should have fought for the right to decide the major issues in their marriage, fought not towards the end when all she saw was his back”(183). She knows right now there is no use of desiring anything, but she dreams.

Ishita struggles to fight for the meaning of her life, i.e. why she is born “If she had a wish in life it was to be a homemaker, with husband and children, something every girl she had ever known effortlessly possessed” (185). Eventually Ishita decides to adopt a child and shares her wish with her parents. Mrs. Rajora wants her to marry for the security of her future, but Ishita doesn’t want to wait for a proposal to come-“I wish you could understand how sick I am of this whole marriage business (188). She snaps at her mother, she doesn’t want to see any ridiculous man. “At least it will be nice to choose my fate instead of just waiting for some husband to appear” (189).Ishita’s father wonders to see the glow and confidence on his daughter’s face, she has achieved with her independence. He wants to see his daughter to be happy, without caring what people think of her, if she adopts a child.

GayatriChakrovartySpivak in her renowned work “Can Subaltern Speak?” has mentioned about the effects of political independence of Subaltern of inferior women, blacks and other marginalized people in the Third World. Her subaltern studies refer to the subjugation of woman subjects by dialogue between male dominated West and male-dominated East. She says:

In subaltern studies because of the violence of imperialist epistemic, social, and disciplinary the inscription a project understood in essentialist terms must traffic in a radical textual practices of differences. Subaltern historiography must confront the impossibility of such gestures. The narrow epistemic violence of imperialism gives

us the imperfect allegory of the general violence that is possibility of an episteme. (27-28)

Spivak seeks the epistemic violence as a bitter side of colonial experiences. She even takes the same tool to strike back to imperial thinking and behavior. Her critique is rather academic because she seems epistemic violence as a naughty face of colonial stigma and violence.

Patriarchy does not take single a care about the ego of females. They have the rights to interpret women according to their viewpoints. It is a very clear example of the hierarchical condition of the woman in patriarchy. For such condition the famous third world critic.

Mrs. Kaushik and Mrs. Rajora become good friends because of the parallel destiny of their children, both divorced and betrayed at the hands of their winning partners. They exchange talk about their children and their broken marriages. Mrs. Kaushik suggests Mrs. Rajora to bring Ishita to see Raman when he comes with Roohi at Swarg Niwas. May be they like each other's company and exchange their feelings which may lend to get over brooding. After all, they both are facing the same circumstances somehow.

In Ishita's plight, the second wife's desperate struggle to replace the biological mother, while Ashok presents a more ambiguous kind of care. Ishita goes to see Raman and Roohi, plays with her and feeds her. Raman notices all this and feels pity for Roohi because she is not getting the motherly care and love. He again thinks of Shagun and hates her for what she has done to his children "He was dependent on strangers for a motherly touch – that was what she had reduced them to" (267). Ishita is not that much beautiful as Shagun, thus Raman doesn't find her attractive in the

beginning but gradually he starts liking her because of her sweet behavior with Roohi:

But how long can a lonely, jilted man resist a woman so totally opposite from his wife? A woman who has entertained his child and done her hair? And fed her when she fussed, and seemed to enjoy it? A woman who has been divorced, who has known rejection, misery and unhappiness? A woman who is casually thrown across his path by mothers who are working in tandem without a word exchanged. (269)

Mrs. Rajora wants to be the first in line for any match that may come for Raman. Mr. Rajora scolds his wife for behaving like an idiot. He doesn't think that a divorced man, already having two children, is as though such a big catch for Ishita. Mrs. Rajora knows the reality of the world. "The reality of the world was that all men were catches and only some women"(270). And this realization makes a daughter's mother constantly watchful. Ishita is not one of those lucky women who are good catches.

Arjun and Roohi visit Shagun, who has recently been settled in New York. Arjun finds the place interesting and adventurous and enjoys parties with his mother and Ashok. Their experiences of DPA bring Arjun and Ashok closer, because Ashok has also studied in the DPA and Arjun can share his experiences with him. After his visit to America, Arjun's behavior changes towards Raman. "Arjun was reluctant to share his experience; he had learned enough to depress him thoroughly." (284) Raman can't provide him glamour and adventure of foreign countries like Shagun but he can give him stability and love, and consistently trying this. But Arjun is not able to understand his father's emotions because of his young age and the influence of his mother's manipulation.

Raman is hurt due to Arjun's reluctance and he feels an unknown distance has filled the air between him and Arjun. Raman shares his grief with Ishita "When I am alone with him its fine. But when Roo is there, he just lashes out, I don't know why, though I imagine it has to do with the divorce I can only trust it won't cause any lasting damage"(287).It introduces another image of woman, who shares everything equally with her husband, either it is drinking. Ishita feels completeness in the company of Raman and Roo. She always yearns for such a caring family to look after, and who will love her in return. Ishita and Raman like each other's company and share their grief. They start meeting each other frequently. Raman takes Ishita to his home to help him in caring Roo, and offers her a drink and she approves to have one. She tells him that her parents don't know about her drinks, "We used to drink sometimes when we went to friends" houses when the elders were not around" (290). Raman proposes for marriage and gifts her diamond ring.

Pankaj Tiwari makes an additional contribution to the Kanchan's exploration of self and identity. Tiwari claims that only the typicality friendly feminist approach can do some justice to the sufferings and subordination of third world woman. Tiwari makes the following disclosure:

Contrary to Western feminism, third world feminism as a new feather wishes to bring into light the typicality of problems of women of the Third world nations. This is mainly the initiative of those activists, and academics that belong partially or fully to once colonized countries. They are working for the all-round amelioration in the lives of women of exotic origin. (87)

The victim's journey from shipwrecked marriage to successful literary career and second marriage is that fate does not have anything to do with the individual's life. It

is up to us to make our life better or worse. The victim comes to comprehend this fact in a costly way. It is she who has to sacrifice many things to know this wisdom. She has to go through several trials and tribulations to accomplish what suits a mind skeptical of the fatalistic forces.

When Arjun is with them, Ishita makes it a point to announce and discuss the dates of interviews in different schools, so that the information may be conveyed to Shagun through Arjun that Roohi can't visit Shagun during holidays. Raman doesn't like these ideas- "We can't really make messengers out of the children" (343). Ishita doesn't want to send Roohi to visit Shagun, ever in her life, because it may confuse and distract the child. Roohi, under Arjun's influence, asks Ishita "Are you sure you are my mother" (341). Ishita does not want her repeat the same question. She doubts if she keeps visiting her biological mother, she will be confounded. Eventually Roohi is not sent to America with Arjun.

When Arjun comes home during vacations; Ishita and Roohi, goes to Ishita's parents' house, leaving Raman alone with Arjun. Ishita decides to send a medical certificate to deny Roohi's visits to Shagun. If Arjun finds Roohi fit and sound, he may tell his mother and she may file a contempt of court against them. On the contrary, Raman wants both children to spend time with each other to establish the bonding of brother and sister relationship stronger. Ishita convinces Raman that it is not in their favour to let Arjun meet and see that Roohi is well. Raman agrees, but is partially hurt- "Why was not it possible to have everybody he loved under one roof? Thought Raman. If he was another sort of man, perhaps he would have handled such things better" (365). Raman and Ishita send a medical certificate to inform Shagun that Roohi can't visit her because of her ill health. As a result, Shagun pretends that Arjun too cannot visit Raman on medical grounds. If Raman is keen to see Arjun, he

has to send Roohi to Shagun. But Ishita is determined not to send Roohi ever to visit Shagun. After a great deal of sacrifices her life is complete with the love of a child and husband, and right away, she can't let anybody snatch her happiness from her:

Day by day she enveloped Roo in a fierce and fearful love. The child was hers, if there was justice in the world she would remain hers. To this end she fasted, to this end she turned religious, to end her surreptitiously visited astrologers and numerologists. Her fingers sprouted myriad gems glinting from which gold settings: topaz, moonstone, ruby and amethyst. She, who had objected to the pearl her mother, had forced her to wear during her first marriage. (381)

Shagun warns Raman either to visit Roohi to her, or to face a contempt of court as well as a custody case for her children, and she also threatens him that he will never be able to see Arjun. Raman tells Ishita about the conversation with Shagun, but Ishita can't let Roohi suffer between the trauma of two mothers, two homes and two countries.

Women are guided by the common cause of sacrifice for the collectivization of their freedom. Uma Narayan hints at women's group identity. Union among women is fundamental to reaching the ultimate destination of liberation. Her view is mentioned below in a precise way:

The focus is not on a universal human nature but upon positively re-valuing group identities like women/ the feminine. Where the equality perspective associated with strongly modernist accounts like liberal and Marxist feminisms is inclined to argue that difference between men and women is either a myth or produced to perpetuate women's oppression and should be transcended. (46)

Even if gender differences are abolished, women may not be totally free from the pitfalls and hazards set by patriarchy. It would be really difficult to actualize the dream of liberation. Several evidences can be forwarded to claim that many women have not supported other women.

One group of women must have active sense of empathy and participation in the struggles of another group of women. They belong to the same boat. If the sorrow of women does not touch the other, they can secure the sound prospect of freedom. Group identity of women is cornerstone in guaranteeing the freedom.

Ishita herself feels unsettled in her second marriage, which she has attempted to seek fulfilment “Over the next few days her sense of danger intensified. She saw a sword dangling over the family life she had created so painstakingly. That sword must be cut down, assiduously blunted, so that it never had the power to threaten” (389). On the other side, one can notice that Shagun is unhappy with Ashok’s attitude towards her children. She feels as if she is a single parent, because Ashok is interested only in Shagun, not in her children.

She expects Ashok to help her resolve the matter of visitation rights of Roohi, but he is not interested. Instead he gets angry, when Shagun mentions that when he is posted to Singapore, she will be able to deal with Roohi’s issue. Shagun has a major fight with Ashok about the issue. He has put his best efforts to get divorced because he needed Shagun; but when it comes to the visitation rights, he is apathetic. Whenever Shagun shares her feelings about Roohi, he gets frustrated. Shagun feels burdened because of the sin she has done. She mentions her fight with Ashok and her grief to her mother in her letter to her mother:

Perhaps I was foolish to believe, but he did promise to keep me happy for ever not that I have reproached him with anything. Our life

together would not have been possible if I had regretted my past still. What happened to that promise? I guess when you are in love, you experience some momentary delusions, then the glow fades and things look ordinary again. Of course, I adore my life here, but sometimes I feel its foundations are fragile. (391)

Raman gets information that Ashok is coming to South-East Asia as head of the region. He, as the CEO, will stay in Singapore and Shagun may accompany him. She may file a case of contempt of court against him because from Singapore, it will be easy for her to come to India for legal formalities. Nandan suggests him to lodge a case before Shagun does it. Raman and Ishita, therefore, file a lawsuit requesting that it will be psychologically damaging to force the little child against her wish to visit her biological mother. As Roohi loves her step mother, separation will be cruel.

Padma Mukherjee argues that feminism has achieved some of its proclaimed agenda and goals. New goals and visions have evolved in the direction of feminist thinking. The new horizon of socio-cultural life has rendered obsolete the old programs of reforms and equality. Mukherjee says "the third world feminism promotes the idea that western societies have reached an era of post-feminism. It is now obsolete because it is overly focused on women's victimized status"(56). The concept of women as a broad social grouping is unhelpful. Problems of women should be viewed in broader category. It is imperative to check the group status and position of women in society to find out factors that contribute to the happening of this sort of problem.

Ishita meets Mrs. Hingorani when she visits Swarg Niwas. Mrs. Hingorani finds her withdrawn and sad. Ishita shares Roohi's case with her. Mrs. Hingorani helped Ishita to get rid of her grief, when she was divorced from Suryakanta. Mrs.

Hingorani reflects a real modern woman in the true sense. Through Mrs. Hingorani, Kapur expresses her views:

Now it was Mrs. Hingorni's turn to look sad. Solving family problems in court was not something she approved of Adults should behave like adults, not like the children they were fighting over. Really, why did people have babies if they were going to subject them to the messes of their own desires? (404)

On the hearing date of custody case, Ishita, Raman, Roohi and Shagun reach to the Tees Hazari Court. Shagun tries to interact with Roohi but gets no response, instead Raman, angry with Shagun, blames her of deserting Roohi at such a tender age and pretending to love her.

All of them are called by the judge inside the chamber for questioning. The judge asks some question to the parents. He wants to know about Shagun's husband's absence in the court. Therefore the judge calls them for a few questions. Roohi tells the judge that Ishita is her mother and she wants to live with her. Ishita has already prepared Roohi for such questions in the court. Eventually, Roohi's custody is provided to Raman and Ishita, and Arjun's custody is given to Shagun, till the time the kids become eighteen years old and decide on their own. Ishita is happy and confident after the court's decision.

III. Kapur's Vision Concern on Gender Equality

The core finding of this research is that Ishita and Shagun manipulate both their kids for the sake of custody and for their welfare. Ishita needs Roohias she can never bear a child of her own. Shagun, being the biological mother of Arjun and Roohi, claims their custody. The novel reveals the unimagined uncertainties of marriage. The parents bargain with each other for their children for the sake of divorce. This novel gives an insight to go deeper into the heart of children who are torn between the crude and shrewd battle of their custody. In this battle of egos, she has successfully presented the sufferings of innocent children, the complexities of life and different structures of values in her novel.

Women and motherhood are very closely associated in Indian social, religious and mythical systems. The verdict notion that says Matru devo bhava puts mother on the high pedestal of god/dev and hence highly respected and revered position. Motherhood is greatly admired and therefore a traditional Indian woman believes that her gratification or fulfillment is realized in motherhood alone. Childless married women are not only abused but also ill-treated in Indian society. Despite legal rights and other so-called security provided to woman, the situation is still pathetic and much effort needs to be made at the grass root level. On the extreme other end, in mythologies of many civilizations of the world including Indian and African, mother in the form of Goddess and Mother Earth are connected to creation of myth. Their variant roles such as creator, caretaker and the carrier of culture are worshipped. Marriage, pregnancy, child rearing, marital harmony, spousal relationship and motherhood are often used as measuring units in judging the position of woman in the particular society.

In this novel *Custody*, Manju kapur has depicted the failure of marriage between Suryakant and Ishita. The failure is because of infertility, arrange marriage, patriarchy concept which is focused in third world women. The pain and loneliness of all of the characters, from the infertile Ishita's rejection by her first husband to Shagun's frustrations within her tepid marriage and Raman's devastation after she leaves, is set against Kapur's gentle satire. The tragedy of divorce and custody is tempered, though never undercut, by her keenly-perceived soap opera of bourgeois Indian society of the 1990s. Shagun's fling has a touch of French farce; Raman is the classic cuckold, intent on a life of mediocrity. The older generations whose adult children are undergoing divorce relate their situation to Princess Diana's wrecked marriage; Ashok's sales slogans spill over from his workplace to be applied to life. The two children, Arjun and Roohi, become the pawns through which their parents unleash their fury on each other.

This research focus on the sense of female manipulation and domination in patriarchal society through the analysis of female character Ishita by using the tool third world feminism. Ishita, the main character of this novel, who is divorced because of her infertility. It also attempts to dramatize the consequences of divorce, alienation, identity crisis and uncertainties of matrimony in this novel. This research focuses as of divorce, broken marriage and remarriage in upper middle class of urban Indian families. Less sympathy from her mother in laws, rejection instead of love is portrayed in this novel. In his novel motherhood is an institution of patriarchy that insures the control of women by their imprisonment of in domesticity. By observing it this research as an institution of motherhood in patriarchy, where she has to undergo through the stage of isolation, loss of individual identity and sense of alienation, torture. For every third world women life is meaningful only when they have children.

Ishita has great desire of being mother to experience life with all pleasures. The pleasures of every third world women are fulfilled only after being a mother. She became childless. So, she was divorced and exiled from the family. Therefore, Ishita's journey is to assert her motherhood that is complicated by patriarchy.

So, This research depicts role of women in domestic Indian society and their aspiration for independence and it peeps into the problems of women explored with a view to discover and support women's struggle for independence in the patriarchal society. In this way, the research concludes that it is related with the main character of this novel Ishita, who is domination in patriarchal society. To prove this third world feminism is used in the research. Ishita is divorced because of her infertility which dramatize the consequences of divorce, alienation, identity crisis and uncertainties of matrimony.

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