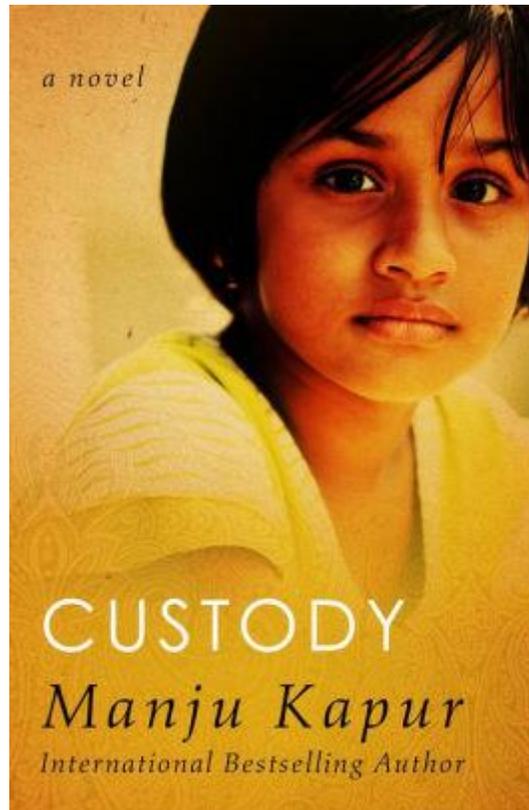


**An Analysis of Identity Crisis of Arjun and Roohi:  
A Study of the Novel *Custody***

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**Abstract**

Manju Kapur's fifth novel *Custody* is highly considered about thriving, upper middle-class people in Delhi. It also dealt with the changes in people's life style due to the Foreign investments in India and as a result of the westernised foreign investments and its influence, Manju Kapur finely presents the nuances of family relationship. *Custody* deals with the life of decent young couple Raman, and his wife Shagun. In course of the time their relationship started to scatter because of Shagun illegal relationship. Manju Kapur presents the emotional fight and imbalance in the minds of the couple and their two children. When the couple decides to travel on their own wish, Kapur beautifully presents the children's fears of loneliness, deprivation, dejection of the two children. Children were taken to various places like commodities from one place to other.

When the parents got divorce, separation took place even physically and mentally with the brother and sister. At the very young age the children have to take decision of their own life,

whether to stay with father or mother. Mnju Kapur beautifully depicts the disastrous effect of the bitter fight for the children's custody, the tyranny of blood and their trauma torn between two mothers and two homes to continue. Thus, the paper focuses the identity crisis of the children in the novel *Custody*.

## Introduction

Manju Kapur's fifth novel CUSTODY explores the modern city life where people have become victims to modernity. Due to the importance given by them to modernity, they never value the relationships. This paper focus on the married life versus freedom, extra marital affairs, manipulation of children in the hands of their divorced parents and indifference of Indian Judicial system. When the novel begins we see a sincere couple loved couple Raman and Shaghun. Raman married Shaghun and they lived in Mor Vihas. Raman was a sincere hard working ambitious obviously talented company worker. Raman and Shaghun have a son named Arjun. Shaghun stayed as a very good house wife until she met Ashok Khanna, the manager of Raman. Ashok Khanna and Raman worked together. Raman was a very sincere man dedicated himself for his duty. At the same time, he gives his weekend time for his family. Their weekend starts with family freinds, clubs, and parties. Raman entertained Shaghun and children. Shaghun was pregnant for the second time and she gave birth to a girl named Roohi.

During her eleven years of married life many men had looked at Shaghun, looked and looked but none had ventured across the boundary line of matrimony expect Ashok Khanna. Shaghun from her young age wanted to live a life where she will get popularity. She wanted to try her life as a model. She loved it. But her mother, who is a widow, compelled her to marry Raman. Shaghun mother liked Raman more. For her Raman is like a son to her. Ashok Khanna understood the mindset of Shaghun. Ashok encouraged Shaghun to act in ads. Ashok told Shgahun if she acts in ads she will get popularity and she can fulfil her dreams. When Raman visited so many places officially, Shaghun visited different places for her ads. Ashok took the absence of Raman for granted. He tried to exploit Shaghun in so many ways.

## Illegal Relationship

Shaghun started an illegal relationship with Ashok Khanna. Her love and passion for Ashok grew stronger. She left her children to the care of her mother and she spent the night with Ashok Khanna. Raman suspected Shaghun behaviours. Whenever he phoned home from office Shaghun will never pick the call. Only the servants who are in home attended the call. They will inform Raman that Shaghun has gone out.

Raman's suspicion towards Shaghun grew more. He with the help of detective agency founded that his wife Shaghun had illegal relationship with his boss. Raman understood that when he was sincerely working for long hours, so grateful to his boss, his boss sincerely screwed and destroyed his family. When Raman showed the picture of Ashok and Shaghun found together, Shaghun was shocked. She informed Raman hat she needs divorce. Shaghun applied f'or divorce and she thought she will be happy with Ashok Khanna. When her mother worried about her daughter behaviour

and advised her she didn't listen. She feels that she needed freedom. At the same time she fought for the custody of her children.

### **Crestfallen Crux of Arjun and Roohi**

Crisis of identity is a very big problem of an individual. People in this materialistic world go in search of all things including identity. If there is no individual identity for a person, he cannot live in this society. The plight of Arjun and Roohi is very miserable. When Shaghun applied for divorce and she decided to live with Ashok. As Ashok got a new job in the United States, she decided to leave for US. Before leaving for US, Shaghun and Arjun lived with Ashok. Arjun has no interest with the new house he lives. He remembered his father and his support for him in his studies. In the new house, Ashok never cares for him. Arjun hated the atmosphere existed in Ashok's house. Arjun felt reluctant to attend his regular school. Shaghun and Ashok decided to join him in boarding school. The judge said that Arjun should be allowed to go to boarding school and the father will have access in the weekends.

Raman took care of Roohi. He found difficult to bring her without mother. Later he played well the role of father and mother. Separation took place between brother and sister. In boarding school Ashok has been introduced as his father. When Raman visited him, Arjun was not happy to see his father. Thinking disturbed him that his friends will mock at him by saying that he has two fathers. Thus, two children got affected in their personal life. Roohi, two-year girl, may not express her feelings through words, but her behaviour clearly reveals that she suffers because of the fight between parents. Arjun grown up boy understands the problem between his parents and cries within himself.

### **Ishitha's Craving for Identity**

Ishita married Suryakanta. Their married life was happy, until they met gynaecologist because Ishita has not conceived in their five years of married life. Ishita got her divorce because of her husband's conventional approach for her barrenness. She was insulted for her infertility. After her divorce she was living with her parents. Ishita was more worried about her identity. She considers herself as a burden to her family. Change came to her life when she met Raman. Ishita had close attachments with Raman and Roohi. Ishita and Raman had ex in their life. They never seemed to be guilty about what they did because Raman doesn't want to be faithful to his unfaithful wife and Ishita doesn't want to remain loyal to her husband who never loves her. They both decide to marry. Roohi had close attachments with Raman. Ishita took care of Roohi like her own mother.

### **State of Imbalance with Arjun and Roohi**

Arjun started to stay in Ashok's house because of her mother's compulsion. Arjun was found to be so different in his character. He never showed his interest in his studies. He was so adamant and violent in his behaviour. He hated Ashok and he longed to see his sister. Though there was age difference between him and his sister he loved her so much. He started to cry saying that he hated going to school. Ashok and Shaghun decided to send Ashok to boarding school. Ashok and Shaghun went to the United States. In holidays Arun was asked to visit US. He visited twice and Roohi once. After returning from US, Arun was much worried by saying that mother was there alone in US. Roohi also cried by saying that wolf will come and kill her mother. Raman understood that this story was told to facilitate such a separation. Because of Shaghun's dream of

living a modern life, her children suffered a lot. Shaghun can enjoy only with Ashok. But she couldn't enjoy with her children. Fought for the custody of both children.

## Conclusion

Shaghun asked for legal judgment of both the children, particularly for little girl. She also informed judge that only to get divorce from Raman she has given custody. Ishita informed Roohi that she has to tell judge that she is her mother. Judgment day came. As Arjun is about fifteen and a half he has the freedom to decide with whom he has to stay. Judge informed that he wanted to talk to Roohi alone. After twenty minutes Roohi emerged and she told that she informed to the judge that she wanted to stay only with her mother Ishita. Later Raman informed that judge has given Roohi to them and Arjun to Shaghun. If the children wanted there would be visiting but not otherwise Ishita felt that she couldn't help Raman with the boy, but she would make up to him as much as possible with the girl. Arjun and Roohi got separated because Shaghun was adamant and thought of living a westernized life style. Claiming for Custody started when Roohi was three years old. Now she was eight years old child and missed the brotherly and sisterly affection with them. They faced lot of mental worries and disturbance at their very young age.

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