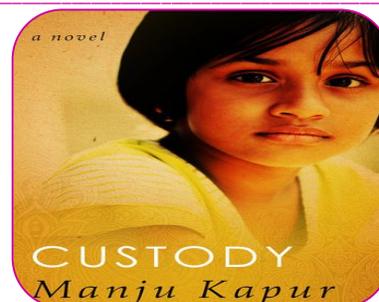




## MARITAL RELATIONSHIP REFLECTED IN THE SPEECH ACTS IN MANJU KAPUR'S NOVELS: *CUSTODY* AND *THE IMMIGRANT*

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### ABSTRACT

In the novel *Custody*, Manju Kapur has presented Shagun as an ambitious but a wayward wife, who forsakes her husband to go with Ashok, the boss of her husband, Raman. Shagun has two children, a son and a daughter, and yet she is enamoured of Ashok on account of his status. Shagun's clandestine love affair with Ashok is exposed by Raman, and there is no alternative for her but to forsake her husband and go with Ashok. Shagun's mother also suspects her daughter going astray, and is worried about her, Shagun lies even to her mother when Raman confronts her with photographs and accuses her of her illicit relationship, she has no way but to abandon him and to go to Ashok. She accuses Ashok also of not being careful. In her interaction with her husband Raman and the lover Ashok also, Shagun violates the maxims of politeness principles.

In *The Immigrant* there is another marital relation on the way to break. Nina, who migrated to Halifax, Canada, after marrying the dentist, Ananda, joins a course in the library science, and carries on extramarital relationship with a fellow-student, Anton, who too is married. Ananda himself is worried about his sexual adequacy, and without his wife's knowledge takes treatment from the expert. Nina, however, is estranged from his as she forms new relationship.

**KEY WORDS:** *Enamor, Morals, Marital, Clandestine, Liaison*

### INTRODUCTION:

The men and women in the fiction of Manju Kapur belong to the middle-class or high-middle class families, either in business or belonging to the corporate world. Like men, the women in her fiction are ambitious, looking for pleasure and material well-being, flouting the norms of ethical behaviour expected in the marital relationship. The tensions in their married life are generated due to the attraction the women feel for richer or more powerful men that come in their life, and their hankering after better opportunities their extra-marital affairs can afford to them.

In Manju Kapur's novel, *Custody*, we come across the female protagonist, Shagun, who is married to Raman, a marketing executive in a multi-national company. His beautiful wife, Shagun, a mother of two children, is enamored of Raman's boss, Ashok Khanna, and carries on her clandestine affair with him until Raman discovers it. But before Raman Shagun's mother discovered that her daughter was engaged in an illicit love affair. She asked her:

'Who is he?'

Shagun blushed.

'What are you talking about, Mama?'

'You weren't really in Bareilly, were you?'

'Of course, I was. Phone Rita – I can give you her number – and ask her.'

(P: 36 *Custody*)

Shagun's mother has uncanny feeling about her beautiful daughter's morals. In her question 'Who is he?' she is doing FTA, directly charging her daughter of carrying on an illicit affair. Her daughter, Shagun, on the other hand, uses an Expressive speech act, deploring her mother's suspicion that she was with someone, and in a Commissive speech act refuses to give straight answer to her direct query challenging her 'face'. Her Wh-question violates the Maxim of Agreement of the politeness principle regretting the veiled accusation in her mother's question that she was with someone else. The mother follows her question with a negative yes/no question tag, expressing doubt about her daughter being at Bareilly with her friend violating the Maxim of Approbation, indirectly charging her daughter that she was not with her girl-friend, but with some man. Shagun, on the other hand, violates the Maxim of Agreement telling her mother to phone her friend, Rita to check whether she (Shagun) was really with her or not. Her blushing at her mother's first question itself, betrays her that she is telling a blatant lie.

Shagun's deceitful behaviour makes her tell blatant lies. When there is a new watch on her wrist, Raman naturally asks.

'Where did you get that?'

'Mama.'

'I have never seen her wearing it.'

'My father gave it to her long ago.'

He turned her wrist around. 'Looks new'.

'She kept it very carefully' (Shagun)

(P: 46, 47 *Custody*)

Shagun's very pert answer to Raman's simple query violates the Maxim of Quality of the cooperative principle as she is telling Raman a blatant lie, as the watch was given to her by Ashok. Raman's further statement expresses doubt, bald on record, when Shagun says her father gave it to her mother long ago, it is flouting the Maxim of Quality of the co-operative principle, as she knows it is false. Raman's action of looking at it and saying 'it looks new' challenges Shagun's explanation as he indirectly denies the watch being old, as he does the FTA saying it looks new, indirectly challenging Shagun's explanation, indirectly flouting the Tact Maxim of the politeness principle.

Raman had a suspicion about Shagun's illicit relationship with Ashok, so he had taken help of a detective agency to check it out. When he got the pictures, he confronted Shagun, asking her:

'Was it true, what he found out?'

She only looked terrified.

'You have nothing to say?'

'What do you mean?' Her face was shriveled.

'Is it not clear? Why do you insist on playing innocent?'

'I have done nothing'

'Nothing? Screwing around with Ashok Khanna is nothing?'

(P: 87 *Custody*)

Raman's yes/no question is only for seeking confirmation, a Directive Speech act, following the Maxim of Manner of the Cooperative principle, briefly asking Shagun if what he found out is true or not, and repeats his query, a Directive speech act again, inviting her answer. Shagun's Wh-question is an Expressive speech act, indirectly deploring Raman's question about the photographs revealing her immoral affair.

Raman, in response, accuses her of playing innocent, deploring her effort to show herself innocent. She asserts in her Representative speech act that has done nothing. But Raman accuses her in his Commissive speech act refusing to believe her. Raman, here, violates the Maxim of Approbation dispraising her of having immoral relation with Ashok. He also violates the Modesty Maxim of the politeness principle using obscene expressions to accuse her.

When Raman was on phone with the Bombay office, Shagun went to see Ashok. She confronts him:  
 'You promised it was safe'  
 'Have you seen the pictures?' (Ashok)  
 'No, their existence was humiliation enough.'  
 'Then how do you know their contents?'  
 Could be you leaving the house, or you getting into  
 taxi, or us talking together-could be thousand  
 explanations for that.'

(P: 90 *Custody*)

Shagun's Assertive speech act is in fact an accusation blaming Ashok for exposure of their illicit affair. She violates here the Tact Maxim of the politeness principle blaming Ashok of being negligent as their affair has now been known to her husband, Raman. Ashok's question is a Directive speech act as he intends to find out if the pictures are really in criminating or Shagun is just needlessly panicked. Here he tries to follow the Maxim of Consideration of the politeness principle, to minimize discomfort of Shagun, suggesting indirectly there could not be such pictures and she is needlessly panicked. But, Shagun in her Expressive speech act deplors that their mere existence was very insulting to her. Ashok, in his Wh-question expresses doubt, violating Agreement Maxim of the politeness principle, that Shagun could not have known the contents of the pictures, and supports it suggesting that the pictures could be harmless about Shagun leaving the house, etc, and tries to assure her that the pictures could be properly explained, following the Maxim of Consideration of the politeness principle.

Ashok Khanna was transferred away as a result of his illicit affair with Shagun. She spends most of her time with her mother. The mother, being traditional, naturally does not want Shagun to destroy her marriage. She asks Shagun:

'Raman will let you take the children?'  
 'Really, Mama,' said Shagun, 'What do you want  
 me to do? You want me to kill myself, then you will be happy?'  
 'Beta, why are you talking like this? Have I  
 said something wrong?'  
 'No- it is only me that is wrong. Me – my  
 whole life, from this stupid early marriage,  
 to – to having Ruhi so late – Arjun is  
 old enough. I can explain things to him –  
 but Roohi? What can a two-year old understand?

(P: 94 *Custody*)

Shagun's mother, already opposed to her daughter's divorce, asks her this yes/no question, implicating a problem of the custody. She indirectly follows here the Maxim of Tact of the politeness principle to dissuade her daughter pointing out the difficulty because Shagun, naturally, loves her children

and would not like to part with them. Shagun's flaring up in anger with her questions, is her impatient reaction to the problem, violating the Maxim of Consideration making her mother feel discomfort at the mention of killing herself. The mother, taken a back, in her Expressive speech act, asks her why she (Shagun) is speaking like this. She appeals to the Maxim of Agreement to minimize disagreement with her daughter, indirectly pointing out that her questions are quite right in the circumstances.

Shagun reacts to this, impatiently following the Modesty Maxim, inviting blame to herself for early marriage and having the child, Roohi, so late. She cannot explain divorce to her, though Arjun is old enough to understand it. Her impatient reaction to her mother's questions is the evidence of her guilt and her mistakes.

Shagun manipulates the children by not making them talk to Raman or making her son tell Raman that he does not want to leave his mother. This is the final straw to fall in their marital relationship, leading to divorce and a case in the family court for divorce as well as the custody of children.

As Losini M.M. rightly remarks 'it is evident that marital life in India is fast disintegrating and being shaped by foreign elements such as extra-marital affairs, materialistic pursuits, and so on... (P: 202)

In the novel *The Immigrant*, Manju Kapur presents the marital relationship between Ananda and Nina. Nina marries Ananda, the dentist, practicing in Halifax, Canada, and she is the immigrant, who discovers sexual and emotional inadequacy of the husband, Ananda. When she joins a course in the library science, she comes across a fellow student, Anton, who is also married, and develops sexual liaison with him. The marital relationship of Nina and Ananda, thus, hinges on the sexual incapacity of Ananda as well as Nina's craving for her personal career and the intimate friendship she develops during her course in the library science.

Ananda takes help of a consultancy to improve his sexual performance, which he does without telling Nina anything, pretending to go to attend seminars and conferences. However, there develops estrangement between them, as Nina, joining the course in the library science, takes an opportunity to visit libraries in the cities like New York. There she continues her affair with Anton, despite Anton's wife's presence in the same city. Anton has forcible sex with her, which makes her realize how stupid she has been in being deceived in reading Anton's character.

Nina is worried about having no child even after months of their marriage. She once cried over it. And later she joined La Leche League for advice. Nina longed for her own child and joined, La Lache League (a women's organization) for advice. She was troubled by a suspicion if she was a sterile woman.

Here Nina the newly married wife of Ananda, arrives in Canada with Ananda. But very soon there is discord between them. She wants a child to fill up her empty life as a housewife, but she does not know Anada is sexually inadequate. He is undergoing a treatment, but does not confide in his wife. She joins a degree course in the Library Science, and comes across a fellow student, Anton, a married man, forming sexual liaison with him.

The marital discord between Nina and Ananda begins with the problem of not having a child. Nina wants it, and Ananda, who is secretly undergoing treatment for his sexual adequacy, is not really to talk about it. Nina has read about Masters and Johnson, who could help in this matter. When she mentions it, Ananda reacts saying:

'I don't need you to tell me about Masters and Johnson. They have been around for a decade, you know.'  
 'Then you are aware they treat couples in their clinic in St Louis.  
 And claim an eighty percent success rate. Why can't we go?'  
 'For how long have you been researching this?'  
 'I have not been researching this. I just read about it in some magazine.'

(P: 183 *The Immigrant*)

In response to Nina's suggestion to see and consult with Masters and Johnson, Ananda reacts in a Representative speech act, saying he does not need Nina to tell him about them. In his reaction he appears to flout the Maxim of Relation of the cooperative principle, because Nina expects him to see the fertility consultants, but instead of reacting to it, he talks about how he knows them. Nina persists in her argument why they (she and Ananda) cannot go to them, which is a suggestive speech act, in which Nina follows the Maxim of Tact of the Politeness Principle.

Nina starts participating in the co-counsellors' group, where women meet to discuss and get advice about their problems. Nina cried there when she listened to the problem of others. When Nina's turn came to say something about her problem, Gayatri, her co-counsellor, reported:

'She doesn't say anything, she just cries'

'Why is that, Nina?' asked Lore gently.

'I don't want to talk about myself. What can

Anybody do? They can do nothing. I can do nothing.'

Beth said, 'The purpose of the group is to explore yourself,

not to offer explanations. It is not important that we know why you are crying, but Nina, it is very important that you know.

(P: 229 *The Immigrant*)

Gayatri's statement about Nina is a Representative speech-act informing the group about the state of Nina's mind, following the sympathy Maxim of the Politeness principle. Another member, Lore, asks Nina the reason for it, a Wh-question which is a Directive speech act asking for the reason, following the Tact Maxim of the Politeness principle, in order to help Nina gather her courage and talk.

Nina's helplessness in her marital life is, in a way, related to her childlessness. In the group of women, she expresses this saying,

'If I could get pregnant it would be so easy'

(P: 230 *The Immigrant*)

As the counsellor says, women are conditioned to think a woman's fulfillment lies in birth and motherhood..... (P: 230 *ibid*) She talking to her husband, Ananda, She says she has to do something that ensures her a job. She feels frustrated being away from her home (in India), having no job having nothing to do. She is nobody, just a wife, and no individuality of her own. Her joining a course in the Library Science drifts her further apart in her marital relationship.

In the light of speech act theory, maxims of cooperative principle, maxims politeness principle, the above study reveals the fact that characters in these fictions suffer a lot for one or other reason. As a result, they are directly involved in relationship with others. As it is mentioned that the novelist in her fiction, 'Apart from that love and arranged marriage, Kapur shows the extra 'Marital affairs' and 'Premarital affairs'. (Vol. iii, issue XXVI, 2017)

## CONCLUSION

The novels of Manju Kapur, *Custody* and *The Immigrant*, show how marriages break on account of ambitions of the spouses, and their desire to chart their independent way. Shagun, the female protagonist in *Custody*, gets enamoured of Ashok Khanna, the boss of her husband, and breaks up her marriage though she is the mother of two children. And in *The Immigrant*, Nina, who marries Ananda and migrates to Canada after marriage, joins a course in the library science. She also forsakes her husband forming sexual liaison with a fellow student called Anton, who too is married. The writer presents these two female characters to

show how their ambition and their tendency to seek pleasure in extra-marital relationship break up their marriage. Shagun breaks up her marriage as she is ambitious of climbing up in the social ladder by forming new alliance with Ashok, who takes her to the USA, while Nina finds Ananda sexually inadequate and seeks extramarital pleasure with Anton. The marital relationship of this modern couple, thus, comes to nothing on account of the lack of mutual love and understanding.

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