The fourth novel, *the Immigrant* (2008) is a different story from the rest of the novels. Nina, the protagonist leads a life of her own choice away from her familial ties in Halifax after attaining a degree that makes her to be independent. Unlike the other stories, this story centres round the characters in Delhi and Halifax. As Kapur shows her protagonists as well-educated and independent, Nina in *the Immigrant* (2008) also works as a lecturer in English. She marries Ananda, a dentist and moves to Halifax. To stand on her own feet, she finishes her graduation in Library science and moves far from Ananda, as he deceives her having extra marital relations. Nina changes herself from outdated traditions to modern inputs.

Kapur has undoubtedly proved as a feminist writer. She had dealt with women suffering under their own domains. Kapur’s women are not the common women, whom we see around us. Though they have similar predicaments, the protagonists of Manju Kapur have crossed the boundary lines to prove themselves. One struggles to liberate herself from the clutches of family traditions, the other tries to breathe in fresh air from the suffocated marriage systems, another one proves as a successful entrepreneur challenging the joint family system and the fourth one sets foot on an alien land excelling in academics at par to foreigners amidst her family tensions. Her fifth novel *Custody* was opened for the public in 2011 has continued its own charm of woman’s individual freedom in the conventional family systems.

Her novels refer to various implications in human life. The fifth novel *Custody* (2011) deals with a sensitive relation between the parents and the children. In India, marriage is considered as a sacred affair. It cannot be simply interconnection of a male and female, but includes the members of their respective families. If a marriage breaks up, the people who suffer wouldn’t be the couple alone, but the elders and the children who have connections genetically to them. A marriage is made up of high emotions and expectations between the couple. Each of them enters the relation hoping for illusionary dreams which often fail in reality. This naturally brings out the obligations between the wife and husband thus making their lives distressful. There can be many reasons like financial crisis, misunderstandings between the partners, domination of patriarchal cultures or male domination.

The present study of the novel *Custody* (2011) is a good example of the post marital troubles in educated families. The Kaushik’s and the Rajora’s are the two families in Delhi, who
suffered from the traumas of their married children for various reasons. Raman Kaushik was the only son of the younger brother of Kaushik’s, who lived in Swarag Nivas. Raman Kaushik was a bright student trained in the Prestigious IIT and IIM institutions. It was crystal clear that he shouldn’t marry an ordinary girl like Rohini as Nandan, his cousin did. He was totally captivated by the beauty of Shagun, an outgoing graduate student. He couldn’t think of anything else other than her beauty. How could Raman be so blind? Can’t an engineer and marketing expert imagine the future? May be he forgot that the charm of beauty lies in mental ability but not the physical looks. Physical appearances can be deceptive sometimes.

Raman’s married life was away from his parents as Shagun was not of the type to adjust with her in-laws. Their married life continued with her moodiness but was blessed with two lovely kids, Arjun and Roohi. Arjun shared his mother’s beauty as well as attitude. Roohi was her father’s pet sharing most of his resemblances. Raman’s dancing attendance on his wife made his mother to caution him. When the first child was expected within a year of their marriage, he blames himself feeling it was too early for twenty-two year old Shagun to become a mother. His mother, who is old and experienced enough, pacifies him by saying that the woman of the past generations has become mothers at an early age. It would also be good for the mother as well as the father to take care of them as their age and body would support them for a perfect upbringing. But Raman couldn’t agree to the fact that he himself was born when his mother was just nineteen. Besides being a husband, a man has many promises to fulfil. The brilliant product of the IIM institution has become a successful Marketing head in the India Think Tank. His hard work paved him to step into the International Brand as the marketing executive of Mang-oh drink. As Raman Kaushik shifted from a national company to an International company, his wife also shifted her love from local to international.

Sometimes money alone cannot make things. Though Shagun had a lavish life, she always suffered from her husband’s travelling job. She became restless of being alone with her two kids. How could Shagun deny the fact that money cannot be easily made? Raman moved heaven and earth to give them a comfortable life. Shagun’s beauty made him to be so cautious to see that she was always happy. In spite of his hard work, he tried to make his family feel happy whenever he had a chance to do so. Many wives dream for such a husband and many children dream for such a father. Though he was busy with his work, he always thought of his wife and
children and tried to make them happy. What else can a man do to satisfy his family? Actually he was the person who needed to be cared by his wife, but as a good husband he tries to make her happy feeling her tiredness during his absence. How many men can understand their partners in such a way? Unfortunately Raman was not awarded for his caring and sharing.

Raman Kaushik was a simple-minded man, who cared for his profession and family. As he cared for his parents, he gave equal importance to Shagun’s mother, Ms Sabharwal. She always felt she had a son in the form of son-in-law, who took care of her, though her daughter treated the affection in a wrong way. The struggles she faced after her husband’s death were no longer haunting her as Raman gave her a secured life as a son, succeeding after his father-in-law. He gave her an assurance that a son-in-law can be substitute for a son. These are the days to find a caring son as the present generation sons are busy running round the clock. Though he loves them, his busy schedule makes him to avoid the simple attachments in life. Ms Sabharwal was lucky to have a son like him. May be it would be a boon to the luckiest mothers. What more than this does a person need in life?

If everything goes on well everyone can lead a peaceful life away from challenges. So Raman had his own altercations to meet both in his professional life as well as married life. As he was an IIT and IIM returned, he could easily overcome the stumbling blocks in his professional life, but he had to struggle a lot to maintain the family relations. Business includes targets and figures which can be altered easily but family includes minds and emotions which are rather difficult to deal with. When two partners enter into a marriage contract, they have only aspirations about their future and it becomes hard for them to deal with.

Raman dedicated his life to his family, especially to his wife and children. Though he knew his mother was rather interested to have a joint family as the elder Kaushik’s, he knew it would be impossible in his case. He didn’t want either his wife or his mother to suffer. He was well aware of the fact that a mother-in-law expects love and admiration from her daughter-in-law. It is difficult as most of the daughter-in-laws are coming from nuclear families rather than joint families. So it would not be so easy for them to adjust. So Raman wanted to have a happy relation between his parents and children. Somanth Kaushik, the elder brother of Raman’s father, helped him to acquire a flat in Swarg Nivas so that both the brothers could stay together with
their families. The elders could live together but youngsters of the younger one’s settled in a far off place in Delhi.

The elder brother was fortunate enough to have a son and daughter-in-law like Nandan and Rohini, who always acted upon the wishes of their elders. Shivnath Kaushik was eager to fulfil the dreams following his brother, but he understood the attitudes of the younger ones and allowed them to move apart. He said slowly to his son, it would be better to stay far as there would be some gap between the past and the present generations. Wherever his son would be, they can visit him. He also believed that the success of a happy family depended on the happiness between the wife and husband. He wants his son and bahu to start their family free from tensions. Is Shagun not lucky enough to have such a father-in-law? Could she repay the gratitude? It was only Raman who could understand the equations and formulas in life as he was used to in his IIT.

An earth quake leaves the traces of flotsam and jetsam. It takes years to retain the past opulence or sometimes it may be not possible at all. The same earth quake has occurred in Raman’s family in the form of his boss, Ashok Khanna, whose influence wrecked the entire family. He was captivated by the beauty of Shagun, forgot the moral values to trap her. He tried to attract her attention by making her to act in the ads. Shagun, who was also interested in Raman’s boss started hating her husband and leading a life of her choice with Ashok Khanna. Her anxiety couldn’t be controlled to know about the Harvard Business School returned boss.

Raman couldn’t suspect her, but was surprised at her enquiry as she had never shown any keen interest in the company matters. Ashok Khanna, the interloper and successful Brand Head had injected the poisonous capsule of hatred towards her life with her husband. Raman could not think it in another way. So he thinks “May be it was the baby she hadn’t really wanted, maybe it was all the travelling he had to do, had always had to” (9). She couldn’t fulfil her wish as she was not independent before her marriage. After marriage, she had a dual role to play. She didn’t think of her independence or dreams before she met her husband’s boss. But after she met him, the dreams started to wake from inner conscious and started to fly to reach the destination.

Ashok Khanna, a winning sales executive as said by Brand could easily create demand of his own in Shagun’s life, as he was an expert in creating demand for the people to consume
Brand products. The formula which is applied in business cannot be applied to life. Life is full of affections, emotions, understandings and attachments. His bossism can be tolerated in the office not at home, that too in personal matters. The leadership qualities, he acquired from his education at various elite institutions were smart enough to apply in business, but not in his personal life. How could Shagun believe such a womanizer? Is it the difference between their drawings of 50 lakhs to 5 lakhs made her to leave her husband? As far as it was concerned her complaint about Raman was he was always travelling. Was it not the same with Ashok Khanna?

There is always a heated debate between which marriage is more perfect, is it arranged marriage or love marriage? In both the instances one thing is quite sure, that is love between the couple. Two different people, who come from different backgrounds and brought ups enter a relation. The first step is they have to know about each other before they engage themselves into the matrimony. In this modern age the choice is given to the couple more than the parents to analyze the attitudes of their opposite partners. In India parents give much importance to arranged marriages than love marriages. But the chances are more for failures in either of the marriages if the bondage between them is not strong. There can be various economic and social reasons for failures. The excruciating thing is that people feel they are technically advanced in their thinking in the modern sophisticated age, but unfortunately the rate of divorce is increasing all over the world. The main sufferers in the broken marriage system will be the children, whose custody becomes an unsolved problem.

Shagun, who was brought up in a traditional family missed her independence, as she was sent to a conventional family. Raman inherited the old cultural values of his parents. No doubt, he was a good husband, father, son and son-in-law, but he failed to understand the trauma that his wife was undergoing. He imagines other reasons for the growing distance between them. Perhaps the reason could be the additional care she has to take on the second baby or maybe she was feeling bored due to his absence from the house regularly on his business trips. But an intimate relationship was not seen between the couple. There was not much to share between them. Shagun was rather happy near Ashok Khanna expressing all her concerns.

Actually if her problem was only staying alone she could invite her mother, who was also unaccompanied by anyone. When her in-laws came to help her in the absence of Raman, she feels uneasy at their arrival. She feels that her in-laws should inform her before they would come
to their house. She may have her own plans. She was actually planning for a show. Her children are at the theatre with her mother. She suspects Raman that he had sent his parents to spy her. Even her mother invites her to her house so that she would be free from the burden of children and can also have a good time with her lonely mother. But she feels comfortable at her home because the children need a regular time table to be followed.

How painful it would have been to the old people to travel back without even meeting their grandchildren. They felt odd that the children were waiting at Priya with their granny while she was alone, but didn’t make it hard for her to face. Shagun was not as innocent as her appearance seemed to be. She could easily manage to draw a line between her married and illicit life. It was only her mother who could make out something unexpected was happening in her daughter’s life. But the astute daughter could manage well by pointing her mother in reverse, “Why are you always so worried about Raman? You should be the one married to him, not I” (34). Can a daughter talk to her mother in such a way? Surely her crafty attitude made her to mislead things. But how long can she manage?

When a suspicion sprouts in the mind it grows into a healthy tree as it receives the necessary elements for growth. She confirms her presumption when her daughter lies to her that she has to help her friend in Bareilly. When she returns after two days with a beaming face her mother enquires who he was. As usual Shagun dismisses the matter with irrelevant answers. What more can a mother do? Once the child gets married and has her own family, will she listen to her mother? No, certainly not. Shagun, who was once brought up in a protective atmosphere in her mother’s place, had now acquired free status with her marriage. Her desire to become a model was shrugged off by her mother as she had her own apprehensions. Her mother, as a single parent found it difficult to tackle the problems that may arise in the modelling field. So she had to oppose her daughter’s interest. Maybe she had easily envisaged the problems her stunning daughter has to face in the modelling career. Unlike all the mothers she wanted to give her a secured life.

Raman could stand above her mother’s expectations. There was a good combination in the match; the striking beauty was tied to the brilliant. The luckiest Shagun was not satisfied with her possessions. Ms Sabharwal could easily guess the reason for the change in her daughter’s life. She knew Raman’s travelling was the main reason. Raman could somehow make some
changes in his professional tours; even the family should be given importance. Shagun was left free with much time in her hand making her life miserable. Her mother was well aware of the fact that young woman in their young age cannot lead the life away from their husband for a long time. When the husband’s duty is to travel to far off places, the wife becomes nervous with the tensed life. Besides she has the burden of the children. She should also play the role of the mother and the father.

Money cannot make everything. It is very important to balance the professional and married life. Raman was a good student, diligent sales person but was disqualified in the post of a husband. Ms Sabharwal was the one who tried to change her daughter’s mind by instilling the family formulas. But it was too late. Shagun was no more interested in Raman. How come Shagun could feel about her distressed life after twelve years of her marriage? May be what Ms Sabharwal feels is also right. As an experienced woman in her fifties, she knows the attitude of a wife and husband. She doesn’t feel that there is real love between the wife and the husband. Sometimes they may act or sometimes they have to as the family or the society demands them. It is very difficult to know how many couple are really enjoying their married life with the strong foundation of love and understanding between them. It is an unsolved puzzle.

Raman, as the name suggests, is just like lord Rama. He is a stoic, as his mother rightly points him. He had gone an extra mile to succeed in life. He gave importance to physical charm rather than the internal perfection. May be his success in his studies and profession made him to choose Shagun, though her mother suspected her if she could be a good wife with her magnificent charm. Raman was blind as a bat and turned a deaf ear to his mother’s distrust. May be Ms Kaushik thought it was not so easy for such a beautiful woman to be a traditional wife. She may also have the chance of living in fantasy world as she has a good charm. Would it not be difficult for her to lead a role as a normal wife? But Raman felt it is enough to have her and the other things which bothered his mother did not matter to him. The charm lies only for a few years.

Raman was happy with Shagun as she was precious to him. His valuable gifts did not mean much to her. She did not show any interest in the things he brought for her from his camps. Manju Kapur clearly shows the interest she had for the watch presented by Ashok Khanna and how she denies to look at the shawl Raman brought for her. Raman couldn’t find any difference
in her behaviour after he arrived from Singapore. He was disturbed when she resisted him. She excuses herself saying she was tired, having a headache. As the suspicious toxin entered his mind and spread to his entire body, he started enquiring about her absence at home and talked to his mother-in-law and finally approached the Lovely Detective Agency. How painful could it be for a husband like Raman to approach the detective agencies to know about his wife?

The bomb was exploded by the Lovely Detective Agency after their secret following and it made Raman dumbstruck, though he had a small expectation about it. He did not want to lock horns with his wife. Really it’s a typical position for a man to react peacefully in such a situation. His inner thoughts erupted like volcanic eruptions. It would be highly difficult for a man to have control in such circumstances. He would not think of anything else other than punishing his wife or take revenge on her by disgracing her family’s honour. It was true that Raman’s attitude was not of such. He swallowed the grief capsule and allowed it to mix in his blood to get relieved from the unbearable pain.

Raman’s pleading to his wife develops anguish in the minds of the readers. He was a good husband. His wife and children were the soul of his body. He had a beautiful family which was constructed with concrete blessings of the parents on either side. He was sure the house would never collapse as it was strongly framed with pillars made of love and trust between the members. He also felt the services he rendered to his family would certainly make his wife and children happy. A husband should work hard for giving a luxurious and comfortable life to his family and should also cater to their needs. Raman cared only for his wife and her beauty. On the other hand, Shagun was not happy to accept such a situation. She didn’t like to put out the skeleton in the cupboard before her children. Her marriage was over at 20.09, May 20th, 1998, when her son was ten years old.

Ashok had made her to accept what she was doing was correct. He didn’t like Indians attitudes, he wanted to adopt western idea and he quotes Princess Diana as an example. He feels every human being should live according to the concerns of their inner consciousness. The only way that one can be happy is if they have a life of their preference. Otherwise it becomes hell for them. So starting from Princess Diana to a normal woman, they want to lead a happy life rather than follow the traditional footsteps. Shagun completely ignored her mother’s suggestion of attending the marriage counselling, which the company would arrange for them. She in turn
blamed Raman for consulting the detective agency. Sensitive Raman’s heart couldn’t bear the torture and gave him pain by making his company poorer by spending 5 lakhs on him. It’s his parents who took turns to attend him in hospital.

Ms Kaushik could easily make out that something was wrong in her son’s family. She blamed her daughter-in-law for not taking any care of her hospitalized husband. She finds fault in her son’s tolerance attitude, “I named you after Ram, because I thought you would grow up with his qualities, but too much patience is not appropriate in a householder” (98). Of course, she was correct, Raman’s too much care and lenience towards his wife had dragged him to the present position. Both Ms Kaushik and Ms Sabharwal were old traditional fools in the view of globalised Shagun. When her mother remarks that she would be the accuser for Raman’s condition, Shagun neither feels guilty nor sad at her husband’s condition. She ignores her mother’s fear that whatever happens in a family, it would be the responsibility of a wife rather than the other members of the family. She has Ashok’s influence on her more and she strongly feels he is correct in saying, “You have only one life to live, only one life” (100).

The heart-broken was accompanied by his parents to home. Ms Kaushik’s motherly affection made her to be more conscious about her diseased son. She cleverly bribed the servants and got the whole picture of their son’s distressed life. As she was too conscious about her son, she started to tell the children that their father needs care or he would die. Shagun’s anguish, Roohi’s sorrow and Arjun’s fears made Raman to send away his parents. The real love which the parents shower on their children shows how Shagun was going to miss a good family.

Ms Kaushik didn’t want to leave her son but Mr Kaushik pacifies her. He could analyse the situation well. His son is already suffering with the cardiac problem, added to it he has his own family problems. In that situation if they are going to stay in their son’s house, the problems may increase. He was good at envisaging the future events because he knows naturally as a mother, Ms Kaushik may point out her daughter-in-law as the main reason for her son’s distressed condition. Perhaps the reaction would be again on their son. So he wanted to make the conditions as peaceful as possible. He also feels his bahu is not of the type that she would kill her husband. Who can have such a big heart to understand things? Mr Kaushik wanted to balance the family sentiments without hurting the feelings of his family members. Though Ms Kaushik knew
their son would never receive the love, he was yearning for from his wife; she was helpless and felt sorry for his thin-skinned feelings.

Raman’s love for his beautiful wife had no boundaries. Though he knew he was not in her heart, he still wants to comprise and make her accept him. May be his blind love made him not to think ill of his wife. Was Raman’s love a passion or a true love? Whatever it was he thought about the powerful external factors that have poisoned her brain. Otherwise she would never behave in such a way. How many men can accept their wife in such a situation? To Raman, she was like Sita, but he forgot there was a demon called Ravanasura in the form of Ashok Khanna. He needs to wage a war against Ravana to get back his wife. The war bells were ringing though Raman wants a modus vivendi.

How disgraceful the situation would be for a wife to face it in front of her husband. Raman wanted to talk to his wife. May be as a normal human being he wanted to have a compromise with his wife or he had thought of the future of his innocent kids. Whatever was the reason Raman had a big heart to give her a chance. He wanted to give his wife a chance by forgiving her past. But was she ready to accept? She feels she has to decide over the matter as she was still under the influence of her husband’s boss. She could not face the warm attitude of her husband. As a sensitive woman, the situation was equally painful to Shagun. Now her mind is completely occupied with the thoughts of Ashok Khanna. Though she knew well about Raman’s big heart she could not trust him. She had her own suspicions. Will Raman never talk about her past in the future? Even if Raman wouldn’t open his mouth what about his parents? It’s not the matter other’s questioning her, Does she forget that she had to answer her conscience? It is more difficult than riposting others.

Shagun could only follow the advice of Ashok Khanna and she wanted to live according to her wish. When she tried to understand her husband’s inner tribulations she was sorry at the thought of how a generous husband would struggle in such situations. She could easily analyse the attitudes of men how they would react in such situations. She compares the attitudes of her husband and her lover and feels her husband is certainly admirable. If her lover was in the place of her husband, he would never behave with her in such a way as Raman had done. She was true, when she went to meet Ashok and bid him good bye for the last time, he didn’t pay any attention to her personal traumas but firmly said there was no need for her to go home and follow him
wherever he goes as their relationship was known to the public. Shagun had a wavering mind which made her to think of Raman or Ashok, when she was only with them. Though she knew she had to struggle for acquiring such happiness, she was willing to do anything for the sake of Ashok, and exit from the dull and boredom life with Raman. It’s quite natural in human psychology that we are easily attracted to things which seem to be smart, though they ruin our lives. We are fond of eating sweets though we know there is a chance of becoming a diabetic patient.

It was so easy for Shagun to have a life of her own. Now the major problem started to take its own shape, the custody of children. Arjun, the elder one could understand the changes in his family, Roohi, who was too small couldn’t digest the changes and started howling at nights. They had to swallow the bitterness as the four members of the family have reduced to three. Though the mother left without a word Raman didn’t blame his wife before his children. He said their mother was a true affectionate mother. Circumstances made her to move out of their life. She just wanted to have a life of her own. Maybe they have to adjust to this new life, though it is difficult without their mother. No other thing is neck and neck to time in healing the problems. So the family can be confronted only with the passage of time.

One can live according to their own wish unless it affects others. When we live in a society, it is important to accept certain standards. Otherwise we will be ostracized by the society we live in. Shagun had her own choice. She was happy with her husband’s boss, but she wanted visitation rights of her children. It was only after a month she called Raman for a divorce by mutual consent. How could a mother forget her kids for a month? Is it a natural phenomenon? She wanted only visitation rights not the complete right over her children. What she wants is not the children, is it only a free life with Ashok? Raman’s anger was reasonable. Naturally a family consists of a mother, father and children. Even the children are used to it. Suddenly the children miss their mother. May be the husband was old enough to understand the situations. What about the children? They are too young to digest the sudden changes at their home. All of a sudden mother who was always behind them and took care of them disappeared. Father who was always away on his business trips was now taking care of them.

Was it not difficult for them to adjust to the new family with three members missing their affectionate mother? Shagun was not sorry for what she had done. She thinks she had done a
great favour to her husband by leaving the children to him. But how could Shagun forget that it was not an easy issue for the children to forget the mother? She thinks her calculations are correct. As she has left the children, her husband should not question her and just sign in the divorce papers. She feels her sacrifice with regard to children is high before the freedom she wants. How can she forget that things cannot be settled on hand in situations? The important thing involved in such issues would be the emotional and ego problems.

Is freedom a small issue? To make a country independent from foreign rule how many people have sacrificed their lives? Can we count the loss? It is highly impossible. The freedom which we are enjoying at the cost of many lives is not achieved easily. How couldn’t Shagun be aware of the fact that nothing is easy when related to emotions? Raman who was down in dumps couldn’t rudely react to his wife’s option but at the same time couldn’t make things easier for her. The generous Raman wanted her to suffer and his wife kidnapped the children in his absence and the things became shoddier. As it was her house Shagun could take her children but how could Raman go to Ashok’s house for bringing his children back. But Raman’s conscience didn’t guide him well. He could have asked his wife for some time to decide over the matters, and then he could be left over with his kids without much struggle. His immediate response ‘no’ dragged him to court to file custody over his children.

It’s human psychology that we don’t like our kith and kin to know about our personal issues. Sometimes it may be better to hide certain things but once the matter has come to limelight, it’s good to approach them for a superior suggestion. Raman’s father was quick at action when he heard about the children. He immediately approached Nandan though Raman was not happy at it. Nandan, as a lawyer and a family member had to struggle with the case. He knew that things concerned with courts cannot be easily solved and at the same time he could understand his cousin’s heart-rending situation. He wanted to tackle the emotions carefully without hurting the family relations. Raman, who pitied Nandan for having a normal woman as his wife, could realize the real world. “His cousin’s wife was knitting some everlasting garment. He looked at her; a dab of red lipstick across her unpretentious face, her hair always in a loose plait. In the years following his own wedding, he had pitied Nandan his wife. The gods were punishing him now” (146). Was it not too late for him to recognize the truth? He had crossed miles before he could witness the real world.
Raman had to face an uphill battle to get his children back. Ashok Khanna’s friend Madan Singh was an intelligent lawyer and was on the ball. Raman could win over his children and Shagun was given the visitation rights of her children. As it is commonly known courts are good at dragging the feet, the situation became uncontrollable for Raman. Arjun was send to Dehradun Academy, as he couldn’t digest the sudden changes in his family. The biological father couldn’t help him to relieve from his son’s sufferings.

Arjun’s mental agony knew no bounds. As he was the elder one, he could understand the changes in his life. He was ashamed to face his friends and teachers at his school in Delhi as he knew better than his mother about the humiliation they have undergone because of their mother’s affair. For her the change was a simple thing. It was just like a move from one place to another when they have a transfer in their job. Arjun couldn’t imagine another man in his father’s place. It was highly difficult for him to face the situation. His growing age made him to analyse the changes at home. He could not tolerate a stranger being close with his mother. At the same time his innocent mind failed to understand how her mother could not resist the man’s actions. Though Arjun looked like his mother, he had inherited his father’s supercalifragilisticexpialidocious qualities from his father. He wanted both his parents. He called his papa in his mother’s absence to tell him about his move to a new school.

Arjun’s matured behaviour should be admired. A woman feels comfortable either with her father, husband or son. Though Arjun was small to understand the extra marital relations, he wanted his mother to be safe from the new comer. Though he was not happy with his new parent he thought it is his duty as a son to support and protect his mother in the absence of his biological father. Only a boy like Arjun can think in such a way as he had shared his father’s blood and attitude. Arjun could clearly differentiate the changes going on in their new and old homes. He was nervous when he saw his mother tolerating the drinking and smoking habits of their new father. He knew his father never had done such things at home. He could not make out how his mother was tolerating the indecency at home. He tried to recall the incidents where she was not comfortable with the outsiders at parties at their home. Certainly, a boy entering teenage had to struggle a lot, as he cannot question his parents in such matters.

As a boy he was old enough to understand the trauma in his parent’s life but was not experienced to handle the situation, Arjun was the best example to forego his agonized life. He
didn’t want to miss either of his parents. He could not forget his father and called to enquire how his father was. When Raman pours out his inner agonies of missing them, he feels sorry for leaving their father but at the same he doesn’t want to leave his mother. Maybe Arjun had a good taste of the motherly and fatherly affection of his parents. Sure if he has to live with one, he has to miss the other. May be as he was intelligent, he thought his presence is much needed for his mother than his father.

No child or parent expects to have such a conversation. Arjun couldn’t show his affection on his sister. May be the age difference was one reason or the silent agonies in his family made him to be rude to his sister. Though he knew his mother was wrong he wants his sister to remember only their biological mother as their own mother. Roohi’s life was happy with her step mother, Ishita as she had none other than the small darling to share her love. Arjun’s interference with his sister made Ishita suffer. He always tries to make his sister remember that they have only one mother, the other person in the house is just auntie. May be the uncle and auntie were the other persons for him. How could Arjun forget that a small girl like Roohi cannot distinguish between a real mother and a step mother?

A human being’s life is not so easy. We cannot live according to our wish. It is God who decides how we have to. We are mere puppets in the hands of destiny. Raman’s life was only a machine; the careful functioning of the machine was to produce good products. Raman was busy throughout his life working hard as a student, earning, saving and giving as an ATM machine to give an affluent life to his family. Was he awarded the best? Certainly the readers feel the first part of his life was not rewarded but the second phase of his life was according to the expected norms. As said above God deals with the sorrows of human beings and Raman’s good days began with Ishita, the daughter of the Rajora’s who stayed along with his parents at Swarag Nivas.

Life is not a bed of roses for anyone, some may have to face health problems, some need to handle economic issues, some may need to bear mental agonies and some have to look into family struggles. Apart from these there are many issues which cannot be even solved. Rajoras were simple people with only a single child, Ishita. Ms Rajora was a working woman and as there was none to look after their daughter they left her in child care centre and due to lack of proper care the girl developed TB. Though Ishita was not so beautiful, she was humble and
completed her graduation and got married to Suryakanta, a product of Delhi Engineering College. Both Ishita and Suryakanta were good couple with simple qualities. In spite of being rich, Suryakanta’s generous parents didn’t demand anything from Ishita’s parents. The only thing they expected from their daughter-in-law was that she should have children to add to their lineage. Though it was an arranged marriage the couple was happy and Ishita could win the hearts of the family members. She guided her sister-in-laws as a sister, helped them to excel in their studies and enjoyed her life at her in-law’s house.

On the other hand Ishita’s parents were also happy, as they had succeeded in finding a happy family for their daughter. She was blessed with affection as well as comforts. If everything continued on the same path there would be nothing to worry about. We become the masters. As the time began to pass the families began to worry about Ishita’s carrying. The process began to take its shape and as a first step Ms Rajora took her daughter to a fertility expert. As a part of her diagnosis the doctor enquired about her previous medical history. As Ms Rajora was aware of her daughter’s TB, she revealed that her daughter was once a victim of it. Ishita, who was a sensitive girl didn’t want to hide this information from her in-laws. As an elderly woman, Ms Rajora had her own fears.

Ishita’s diagnosis continued with the kind help of her in-laws. They spend huge amounts of money on IVF, but of no use. Finally Suryakanta’s mother wanted divorce. Ishita’s life was practically over in their house as she was not fit to give birth to children. They didn’t want their daughter-in-law to be hurt. So she sensibly tackled the matter with her daughter-in-law. Ishita could understand that her mother-in-law was orthodox in nature. Like every mother she too wants a baby for her son. Now it is crystal clear that she would not add progenies to their family. So she has to leave the place. Ishita, who was self-effacing wanted to live the family, but her mother didn’t want to free them so easily. Ishita had to face the humiliation in the house where she was not at all wanted. They treated her as shameless creature, Ishita could understand their feelings. She knew they were not to be blamed, they had done everything for her, they only expected a child from her, but she failed to conceive. She spent happily almost four years with Suryakanta, but now he has no feelings for her. Her sister-in-laws who loved her so much were now reluctant to talk to her.
Ishita knew it was her destiny. Is it her fault? Her feelings were not at all cared, but weren’t they correct? If the fault was with Suryakanta what will they do? Nothing they would do. Either they would adopt a child or accept the situation. They would console the daughter-in-law also to accept the situation as nothing would be in our hands. Whatever God has given we have to accept. How could her in-laws forget her sensitiveness? Ishita’s life has become hell. Unable to bear the torture she pleaded her husband to make her free from the grief-stricken life. She was angry at her mother who was demanding for 10lakhs. As a girl of self-respect she fought with her mother to get rid of her present state. Ishita was too humble, she didn’t want to stay in their house and make them suffer. She thought she can live somewhere if there are problems connected with receiving the money from her in-laws. She wants to leave the house with self-respect.

The heart-broken girl left the house and entered a distressing world. Ishita’s perttrified mind made her suffer and locked her in the house. Ishita’s submissive attitude couldn’t save her from anything. Her entire world was Suryakanta and his family. Suddenly she was thrown out of the house. How much she expected from her married life. Of course her in-laws were good till the minute they found she cannot add a member to their family. Her fate changed. How much she trusted her husband? When her mother was scared to let out that she had TB, she boldly stood on their side assuring that they were not of the type to consider it as an issue and push the daughter-in-law out of the house. She was an optimist; she could not understand the materialistic attitudes of people. Was her sincerity rewarded? Certainly we have to say no. Really Ishita’s former in-laws were unlucky to miss a daughter-in-law like her.

Unlike other mothers, Ms Rajora was also a simple woman, who wanted her daughter to be well-settled in her own domain. Mr Rajora was more practical than his wife. He accepts the things as they are. While his wife’s pessimistic behaviour often made him nervous, he was always optimistic about his daughter’s family. He didn’t find fault in Ishita telling the truth to her in-laws about her TB. May be the father and daughter were not like the other people in the world. So for Mr Rajora, his daughter is grown up, she knows how to lead her life. Parent’s interference need not be disturbing her independent status. It was really painful for parents like Rajora’s to digest their daughter’s present situation. As simple-minded people they don’t expect much from life expect a few things like happiness in their daughter’s life. Whatever may be the
consequences one has to make adjustments with destiny, or life becomes too horrible. Ms Rajora was ready to accept the situation though it was painful for them. Comparison makes things better, so she compares her problem to the women in aristocratic families. Though they are born with a silver spoon, sometimes even they have to face the situations. Wherever we are, however we are educated we have to accept our fortune. Women’s problems are universal.

It was practically difficult for Ishita to get used to her returned life. It was the social activist, Ms Hingorani, who could again drag Ishita into a normal life. The work with the street children made her more comfortable. It’s of no use dwelling on the past. The parents started to circle the ads in the Sunday magazine to find a suitable groom for a sweet home-making girl like Ishita. Jeevan has practically become life for Ishita. Ms Hingorani knew Ishita’s life cannot be confined to Jeevan alone. She wanted the girl to pursue her higher education and Ishita applied for social welfare degree at Bombay. The parents were hopeful that it might bring about changes in their barren daughter’s life. But once again she was star-crossed. The interviewers simply rejected her admission pointing out, “Why should they give her one precious seat if she had done nothing from 1991 to 1995 except be a wife? From the moment she had been born marriage had been the goal, and every choice reflected this” (172). The second unlucky people were the members of the institute, who missed a reliable social activist.

Theists always hope for another when one is lost. Ishita lost her seat in social welfare. As an astrologer said the stars are showing a girl in her hand, might be there is a chance for it to become true. Ishita’s first experience in marriage made her mature to think of her life. When her mother was so anxious about the IPS officer’s match, she simply dismissed the proposal; she knew her mother was not good at assessing attitudes. Ms Rajora was horrified at her daughter’s decision. But she failed to understand that woman like Ishita can easily assess the individuals as she had already assessed two families. She knew relations can be strong only with people who can understand and view life in different ways. If the relation between a wife and husband is amicable it clearly shows that they are accepting, inviting and living their partners.

Ishita had bitter tastes in her life. It wasn’t easy for her to erase the tribulations she had undergone in her past life. Ishu didn’t expect her life would turn in such a way. How much it pains for a woman to walk out of the house after four years of her married life? She was sensible and even her husband’s family treated her in the same way. All of a sudden she was thrown into
a pit. Can she stay for a long time in it? How much should she struggle to come out of it? How can a woman with autonomy forget her disgrace? Ishita knew she was making her parents suffer, but at the same time she cannot jump into fire and burn herself.

Ms Leela Kaushik and Ms Rajora were sailing on the same boat. Both had a common thing to suffer, their children were suffering from broken marriages. Though there problems were different, pain was the same. Ishita and Raman were divorced with mutual consent. Their generosity made their partners free from clutches. Ishita wanted to adopt a child and God showed her Roohi, the motherless child. The crest fallen Ishita and Raman were attracted easily. Ishita’s affection towards Roohi dragged her to Raman’s house. Within a short span of time they became a loving couple. Mr Kaushik, who warned his wife for encouraging Ishita found her as a suitable girl. Her warmth towards her parents deeply touched him, “The girl had the heart of a homemaker. It was touching how she was looking after her parents. Dimly he remembered, somewhere in all the volumes of his wife’s chatter, how much trouble there had been in this girl’s personal life” (260) May be he could feel so because his daughter-in-law never touched their hearts or could suffice the role of a daughter.

Roohi was really a lucky child. Though Ishita wasn’t the mother who gave birth to Roohi, she could easily creep into the role of an experienced mother. Ishita didn’t like to send Roohi to her mother as she knew the little girl would be disturbed between the two mothers. She was very careful to let Roohi know about their marriage. She wanted the girl to know only from her father. She told it in the form of a tale. May be it is general human psychology that we are never happy with what we have; we always crave for what we don’t have. Ishita knew the value of family and children because her life ended like a dream. Shagun had everything in her life, she was beautiful, had a husband who was rich and also adored her. She was also gifted with children. Her in-laws didn’t interfere in her life. It’s a universal vision of women. But was Shagun happy with what she had?

Ishita’s happiness knew no bounds when she became the foster mother of Roohi. Her love was natural. Even Shagun had not shown much affection on the child. The day she stepped as Raman’s wife, she first catered to the needs of the childless mother. She took interest in her activities, called all her friends, enquired about schools and engaged Roohi in all co-curricular activities. The girl fell into heaven from pandemonium. She also respected elders and arranged
get-togethers whenever her husband was free. Really Raman was lucky; he could not only get a wife but also a mother like Ishita for his children. He opposed his wife when she started to take Roohi to school in their car instead of bus. But, she was afraid that she was too small and needs some time to adjust and move with her friends in the bus. Raman feels happy as he knew a mother should be like Ishu, live for the family and think of her family. Then every family will be a successful family.

Ishita was tensed when she heard the arrival of Arjun from DPA. She had her own apprehensions as the boy was old enough to understand the situation and he was already torn between his biological father and his new father. She knew Arjun can change Roohi as he had his mother’s influence on him. She tried to avoid the meeting of the brother and sister. But Raman was scared that they may miss each other. Ishita’s fears became true, Arjun was Shagun’s son. He tried to pollute Roohi by reminding, Shagun was their real mother. The boy’s impact made Roohi to question Ishita, “Are you sure you are my mother?” (325) Ishita knew well that the family which she set up by bearing pains is going to be shattered by Arjun. Though she warns Raman about Arjun, he always says he is too small; he needs some time to adjust. When Arjun could accept Ashok Khanna, why couldn’t he accept Ishita? To be frank enough Ishita struggled a lot to win the heart of the boy. She warmly welcomed the boy. But all went unnoticed.

Ishita didn’t want to send Roohi to her mother. Though it was unfair she had her own reasons. As Roohi was too young she may suffer between her biological mother and step mother. Arjun’s influence on the girl may make her relation distressful. Raman was well aware about the court’s decision that the mother has visitation rights, he knew Roohi was now recovering from the traumas of their previous life and was happy with her foster parent, he denied to send her stating she needs admission in a new school, health reasons and so on. But Shagun’s motherly love made her to file a case against her ex-husband. Raman was sandwiched between his ex and present wives regarding Roohi. Shagun was strict enough not to send Arjun if he was not going to send Roohi. Once again the court gave Roohi to his father and Arjun to his mother.

Extra marital relationships ruin families. The best example can be the life of Shagun. Though Shagun was happy with her present status, it was at the cost of killing others happiness. She knew Raman was the best, but she was attracted to a fancy life. Ashok Khanna, who supported her for abandoning her family, especially her husband didn’t show any interest in
Roohi. May be the reason was Arjun was handsome and brilliant and Roohi was just like her father with normal features. Shagun had struggled to make things peaceful at Ashok Khanna’s house. She didn’t want her children to be boisterous before him. They had a major fight as she was tensed about Roohi. She shares her anguish with her mother in a letter, “Perhaps I was foolish to believe, but he did promise to keep me happy forever” (373). She could realize that a married woman has to suffer with such relations. Ashok can never accept her children. When they grow up may be the problems too may grow. Will he stand by her side to support her?

Was it not too late for Shagun to realize it? Didn’t her mother warn her? She knew well about him that he didn’t care for her children, when she was in Delhi itself. Can a person who is fond of only the beauty of a married woman become an adorable father? Raman was entirely different from Ashok Khanna. He admired his wife’s beauty, but at the same time rendered his duties as a son to his mother-in-law. Shagun feels bad when Ashok Khanna fails to understand a mother’s love, when Ms Sabharwal wanted to give send off to her daughter. May be he wants a charming lady beside him not the emotions and sentiments connected to her. She was sure if Raman was in his place he would have relieved her from the sorrow of missing her daughter. May be he could even have taken her along with them because he knew she has none other than them.

The two topics infidelity and infertility were well canvassed by the writer. Both ruin the families and traditions. Shagun and Ishita were the two people related to infidelity and infertility. The beautiful green eyed Shagun couldn’t see the world through her eye colour, as green is the colour of balance and growth. She lacked the emotional balance in life. She could call her husband with whom she had two children a bastard as he didn’t send Roohi to her. Though as a mother she could not miss her daughter, she must understand that it may be difficult for the small girl to adjust between two mothers. She had growth in terms of money, she married a man, who earns more than her ex-husband and also she became an entrepreneur. She grew by poisoning Arjun’s brain against her father. Who could imagine a teenage boy speak to his father in such away. “Mama says if you don’t send Roohi, she will tell her lawyer to do something” (366). How can a brilliant boy like Arjun forget that her sister (whom he calls as stupid) cannot adjust between two different environments? As a grown-up boy he got adjusted to his new family and also was happy with the trips with his friends where his parents didn’t accompany him. On the
other hand Roohi was escorted by caring parents Raman and Ishita. How can she mingle with her new father’s friends in a distant country?

Whatever had happened had happened, Raman never spoke ill of his first wife in front of his children. He was always careful especially with Arjun as he was too smart. He didn’t even allow his parents to confuse the boy by enquiring about his mother. Raman could understand the sensitive attitude of the boy and he always enquired if he was missing his mother. He was very careful with his son. He knew in such instances there may be a lot of change in their behavioural attitude as they can’t share their feelings either to their mother or father who are staying apart. So he should not forget that this boy should be a part of a healthy future generation and should never be disturbed with unnecessary things. Shagun was not as tolerant as Raman. When Raman said Roohi was not well, Arjun immediately responded in the way his mother trained him by accusing his father. Will Arjun never know the truth about his father’s agony? Sure, he will know, once he grows up and becomes an adult; he can understand the trauma his father had undergone when they were young. As Ishita feels Raman already lost his son, but would gain him again when he realizes the truth.

Ishita was punished for her infertility. Her in-laws had supported her for treatment. But once they found it was a futile exercise, their patriarchal powers dominated throwing her outside. Her husband, who showered love on her turned hostile towards her. Though her mother-in-law was a woman, she couldn’t understand the sufferings of another woman. Ishita’s mind and body were subjected to pains and there were none to console her. They called her as a shameless creature hanging in their house. It is human psychology that they cannot tolerate anything for a second if they feel it is useless. We use many commodities in our day to day activities. When we feel a pen is not suitable for writing, we don’t even think for a second, we just throw it into trash bin. Is a human being the same? Is it the gratitude an educated man should pay to his wife with whom he had shared his life for four years? Unfortunately in the globalised era, are the educated people becoming more traditional and worthless than the uneducated?

Ishita’s pain was relieved only after she could become a mother to Roohi. Naturally she didn’t want to miss her. She had an indirect war with Shagun to protect the girl. Raman could understand Ishu’s condition. For some marriage may be a boon for some it may be a failure. Ishu had failed in the first marriage. Even the second marriage was a test as she has to deal with
sensitive issues. Her intention to be close to Arjun was admirable. She knew a father cannot miss his children. So she was too careful with Arjun so that he would be at ease. Though she knew he was preparing his sister against her, she was cautious while tackling the matter. But Arjun always kept her at arm’s length.

Though Raman’s life was in mayhem, when his wife left him, it turned to bed of roses at the end of the story as he had a caring and loving wife and lovely daughter. She proved Raman’s opinion wrong, when he felt that Shagun or Ishu the attitudes of wives would be the same. But it did not take much time for Raman to know that he was more comfortable and happy with Ishu and was always worried with Shagun because he had to make her always happy. Ishita didn’t expect anything from him but Shagun always expected something, may be freedom. Ishita never thought high of her. She begged Raman to allow her to say about their intimate relation to her parents as she didn’t want to deceive them. She didn’t coerce Raman to accept her after their sexual relation. She thought, “So far as love was concerned, she was a beggar, and beggars can’t be choosers” (283). She felt sorry when she saw her husband’s stunning ex wife and thought for a while that may be if she was beautiful Suryakanta would not have left her. But Raman doesn’t agree to this point. He knows however beautiful a woman may be a man can worship her only if her mind is also as beautiful as her physical charm.

Ishita and Shagun were two different women. One tried to get rid of her husband, who was as precious as a diamond. The other could catch hold of the gem and added value to it by her charm. Manju Kapur wants to show two different women in this novel, one, who fought for a happy family and the other who fought for her individual freedom. There are still certain traditions prevailing in the society, where woman like Shagun are not yet accepted and woman like Ishita are still honoured. As Manju Kapur says she always sticks to the familiar issues in the society, she has represented the real happenings around her. Custody is a modern saga which depicts the middle class families tied up between modernity and age-old traditions, where women are oppressed in the name of patriarchal powers and male domination.

Karl Marx said in his book The Communist Manifesto written in 1848, that the society accepts women as a producer of children. Kate Millet in her Sexual Politics asserted that one of the chief effects of class within patriarchy was to set one woman against the other, by creating a lively antagonism between whore and matron and between a professional woman and a
housewife. Ishita is the best example in this novel that she was totally abandoned from the family for the reason that she was barren. Ishita was punished for her physical illness, but mentally she was targeted. Manju Kapur’s women are ahead of the aged traditions challenging their positions amidst the problems they have to face within the society they are living in. Shagun’s boldness to express her love and Ishita’s courage to fight for a daughter to whom she had not even given birth are new to the readers. Former step-mothers were replaced with sophisticated foster mothers.

One thing which a couple should bear in mind is they need to have a good understanding between them. Money or status doesn’t matter. A wife or husband should have true love, not an adjusting love. Shagun, whose features were a mix of eastern and western, may be had married and given birth to children following the native traditions and moved with Ashok Khanna following a new and strange culture. Ishita, who was an Indian with normal features, had no high expectations, as a typical Indian woman, she dreamt of a family with a caring husband and loving kids. Shagun and Ishita had their lives according to their own expectations.

Feminist movement has a good concentration on the issue of motherhood. Though women want to be independent they cannot sacrifice their motherhood for attaining independence. Again the struggle starts in the minds of the women to prove her identity and motherhood on a parallel ground. There is a debate between the white feminists and black feminists with respect to the choice and necessity of motherhood as a hindrance for women to be independent but quite contrary to the above statement. White feminists believe it as a serious hurdle and they can conquer it by giving it up. According to the view of the Black feminists they admit “mothering as societally shaped rather than a mere biological construct” (Bell Hooks, 1984, 130). For them motherhood is the part of communal and cultural existence and is very important for them.

The twentieth century Women’s movement gave ample opportunities to women to pursue higher studies. Second-wave feminism exposed the politics based on gender discrimination where men were projected as superior races and insisted on the equal status of both the genders. It wanted to completely wipe out the digested theory that women being different from men should be kept apart. It agreed that there is a difference between men and women biologically, but this should not be the pedestal to discriminate them. Simon de Beauvoir’s The Second Sex (1949) gives a complete analysis of the sociological, biological, psychological and economical
difference between the two opposite sexes. She discusses how the motherhood had made women ‘inferior’. She rightly felt that only when women could become independent and free themselves from patriarchal pressures is by giving up their motherhood. In this context, Indu Swami says, “Motherhood is a hindrance in pursuing any career successfully and satisfactorily…. In the name of Mammalian responsibilities women are condemned to a fettered existence” (Indu swami, 2009, 90).

White feminists were sure that motherhood was the main obstacle for women to liberate themselves from the clutches of dominance as their role was entirely designed and confined to house hold activities. White feminists and black feminists were divided in their opinion on this crucial point of ‘motherhood’. White women advocate giving up the roles as mothers, but black women desires to continue the role of mothers. Bell Hooks tries to grab the different perspectives of motherhood between white women and black women. Many black women were saying, “We want to have more time to share with family; we want to leave the world of alienated work” and White women’s liberationists were saying “We are tired of the isolation of the home, tired of relating only to children and husband, tired of being emotionally and economically dependent; we want to liberate to enter the world of work” (Bell Hooks, 1984, 134).

After the nineteen eighties with the advent of third-wave feminism, the insight of women regarding their generic difference has changed. As there were many changes in the field of education, women became financially independent. They could also realize that it alone can fulfil the human needs. So they wanted to have a good bondage with their children. Women felt that being a mother is a kind of source in their hands. They could realize the importance of their strength in having a contented family life. Pandey in The Primacy of Motherhood writes, “The patriarchal world has used motherhood as a tool for women’s domination, whereas the true experience of motherhood, which is entirely the woman’s province, is deemed with pleasure, satisfaction and self-fulfilment” (Mini Pandey, 2003, 111).

Women of 20th century wanted to assert their rights as a mother, but they didn’t want to be a full time mother as they have many roles to perform besides motherhood. Custody projects the central female characters Shagun and Ishita as mothers. Shagun, the mother of two children, struggle throughout the story to safeguard her identity as a mother. While on the other hand Ishita, who fails to conceive wants to be the mother of Roohi. Though Shagun feels suffocated in
her married life and searches for a new life, she never wants to leave her children. Even in her happiest moments with Ashok, she thinks of her children. Though she has Arjun, she never wanted to ignore Roohi. For her independence is highly valued but not at the cost of sacrificing her own children.

Shagun wants to take a divorce from Raman, but never wanted to leave the children to their father. She didn’t want her status to be confined as a producer of the children; rather she wants to be a protector of them. She plans for her son’s higher education and fights for him till the end. She wins over her son’s custody though she loses Roohi because of Ishita’s pressure on Raman and the girl. Though she had a happy life with her new husband in overseas, she wanted her children to enjoy the same. She takes them and does what all a mother can do for them.

Jaishree Misra’s *Ancient Promises* (2000) also focuses on the similar line. Janaki called as Janu brought up in a traditional family of Malayalis move to Delhi with her parents. At the age of sixteen, she meets Arjun, a local school cricketer and falls in love with them. Her family finds out her affair and she was send to Kerala and got her married to Suresh who belongs to their community. Not wanting to hurt her parents and unable to decide her future with Arjun, she enters to her in-laws house. Not welcomed by them and her husband she leads a dull life. She gives birth to a mentally challenged girl, Riya. Janu holds a two-fold position as a mother, wife and continues her education.

Unable to bear the alienation from her family members she moves to abroad to continue her studies. She also meets Arjun and finds that their love was still raw. Suresh refuses to give his daughter to his wife. Janu enjoys her life but misses her daughter. She fights for the custody of her daughter. Finally Suresh agrees to give Riya to her mother. Janu, though not happy in her married life wants her daughter. She fights for her mentally retarded daughter challenging her role as a mother. Whether it is Janu or Shagun they didn’t want to lose their identity as a mother in spite of their hardships in their future families. The only difference in the protagonists was Shagun had to suffer for her divorce as well as the custody of her children. Janu was lucky as Suresh himself agreed to divorce and handed over his daughter.

Ishita’s infertility makes her a divorcee and she finds solace in the company of Roohi. She becomes a real mother to Roohi and didn’t want to leave her. At times she suffers, when Arjun
tries to turn her sister’s attention by showing the difference between the biological mother and the aunty. Arjun feels Ishita as another woman in his family. She doesn’t like to send Roohi to her mother as she feels Shagun may change the mind of the girl. She forces Raman to produce fake certificates stating the girl’s ill health. Finally, she gets Roohi but he misses his son, Arjun.

Women like Shagun and Ishita want to safeguard their motherhood amidst their battles in the patriarchal set ups. Their main importance is motherhood while giving prominence to their other choices. Ann Ducliff, in On Canons: Anxious History and the Rise of Black Feminist Literary Studies states, “White women could simply state that it is important and rewarding, significantly, this perspective is often voiced by many of the white bourgeois women with successful careers who are choosing to bear children” (Ann Ducliff, 2006, 30). It was clearly understood that motherhood and mothering are not only the product of producing a child but it is also a part of their personhood as women.

Ishita stands as the best example to show how her motherhood could nurture Roohi’s confidence. She changed the girl’s life over night. She arranged different classes, dressed her with matching accessories and the father never objected because the girl was enjoying. The way she struggles for the girl’s admission is really amusing, not even her own mother could do such a home work. A mother plays a vital role in a daughter’s life. She would be the sole protector of the girl. Raman could make the difference between the two mothers. As Shagun wanted to spend more time with Ashok, she wanted to join Roohi in pre-school. But Raman didn’t agree to the proposal as she was too small. Ishita involved and enjoyed with the girl in all her matters and didn’t feel her as a disturbance. In turn she was happy to be blessed with a daughter like Roohi.

Ishita was very careful to let out words near Raman. Raman says he is worried about the children as his marriage may be a shock to them. His intention was to hurt Ishita, but she cautiously diverts the topic and says, “Our parents will be glad” (194). Though she was careful about the matters concerned to children with her husband, Raman felt lonely when it was anything about his son. He wanted to share his joy with his wife about his marks. She just said yes and didn’t even look into the card. May be she was afraid that the grown up boy may not accept her as a mother. She has done her duty with Roohi and was happy with her.
The same feeling was being experienced by Shagun, when she leaves her son at DPA. She feels, “Had Raman been with her, her thoughts would have been forcefully confined to their son, he would have talked obsessively of him, would have worried” (220). Both of them could understand their role as parents. Ishita’s attachment to Roohi makes her to fight with Raman. One day Raman says to her that Shagun has called him to inform her arrival to India to take Roohi. She says she doesn’t want to send Roohi anywhere, though it is in the agreement. She asks Raman, “If the agreement says push your children in the well, will you do that?” (340). Raman had to look for escape routes for making her daughter to remain with them.

Kapur shows two women with quite notable differences in one man’s life. Shagun, his first wife doesn’t take care of him, when he had a cardiac problem. She phones to Ashok from the hospital instead of taking care of her husband. On the other hand, knowing his problem, Ishita takes care that he doesn’t have to eat fatty foods. Raman’s mother blames her daughter-in-law, Shagun as she never allowed them to stay with her son’s family. Ishita wanted the elders to be with them and enjoy their time with their grand children. Raman’s parents were glad to have Ishita as their bahu as she fulfilled their dreams. When Shagun returns the gold after her divorce Raman knew she wants only freedom from him the other things were available to her even in her new life and coming to Ishita, her “gratitude gave him the patience to deal with everything else” (308). Raman could finally realise that beauty lies in the mind and heart, not in the physical looks and charm.

Shagun was also fascinated by the charm and wealth of Ashok Khanna. How long would it stay? Generally men of such type cannot be trusted. In many instances, she feels, Raman would never behave in such a way. There is not even a single incident recorded that he was affectionate to the children. As Arjun was grown up and matured, he knew how to be with his new father. But Roohi was small and there was no bondage between Ashok and the girl. Shagun expresses her sorrowful views to her mother in a letter, which makes the readers to anticipate her future. There was a big fight between Shagun and Ashok. The real Ashok has come out. “It happened so suddenly I still cannot figure out what upset him. I just mentioned that once we are in Singapore I could devote more energy to seeing Roo. THAT’S ALL I SAID. He shouted that he was sick of my suffering” (372). She knew he was only interested in her not her children. How can a man, who is not the real father fight for them? Can’t Shagun realize such a simple thing?
There is no doubt that Ishita will win the heart of Roohi that she would forget her real mother, Shagun. What about Arjun? Can he forget the generous and affectionate nature of his own father? Ashoka Khanna cannot substitute the place of his father. It’s sure that Raman will never miss his son, but Shagun may miss her daughter. As Ishita says, maybe it is true, “He would hold on the myth that he played a part of his son’s life simply because he was the father” and she was also happy “She had won this first, most difficult round. Roohi was almost eight, in ten years custody would be legally immaterial. She didn’t think that the woman would go on appeal, but if she did, she was armed with all the arts of delay” (396).

The novel deals with a new woman, who wants to dissolve her marriage for the sake of her love. On the other side, another woman wants to safeguard her position as a mother and a wife. The struggle of these two women shows how women want to live according to their wishes. Both the protagonists are brought up as single daughters. While one is blessed with beauty; the other is blessed with affectionate heart. One considers marriage as a simple thing that can be shattered when they are not interested and for the other it is a sacred thing. For the first woman, children are the weapons to play with her husband and for the second woman, children are precious, who make their lives amusing. One considers family as a boring and monotonous element and for the other it is so valuable. One doesn’t care for her in-law and the other looks after them well. The first woman couldn’t win the hearts of her family members, whereas the second one could win the hearts of all. One lady destroys the peace of her mother and the other one makes her parents happy. For one life is fanciful and for the other one it is serious.

Kapur once again shows how the joint families flourish even in the metropolitan cities. The beauty of Kaushik’s family is well portrayed. Raman was a good son. When his father wishes him to purchase a flat and stay along with them like his brother and his son, Raman says it would be too far Shagun’s mother, who is always alone. At the same time he doesn’t forget his duty as a son. He feels he shouldn’t even leave his parents. A technocrat’s brain could balance the parental care. His father could understand that there was no use of expecting his son to stay with them. Maybe it is difficult to satisfy two women at the same time. So as usual the elders had to sacrifice for the sake of the younger ones. The family thought of Shagun more than that of her mother-in-law. We may have many dreams but all cannot be fulfilled. Ms Kaushik should be satisfied with the dreams that have come true.
Kapur shows how much importance Ishita has given to have a child. She wanted to adopt a child. As she loved her first husband, she thought, why didn’t they have the idea of adopting a child? She was surprised to see a couple adopting a child, though they had a chance of having their own child. She was surprised to see the growing humanity in the globalized world. It is quite amazing that people in the modern world are able to think that they can equally bring up an adopted child with their own progenies. When her father tries to find out about her adoption, she says “I am still not sure. But one day I will be alone. Why should I go on waiting for some man to marry me? Can you guarantee that will happen?” (179), the wound in her heart was still raw. She doesn’t want to fall and hurt again. Her father truly understands her and says till now we have followed the society norms, now we will leave to her wish.

Kapur gives much importance to food in her novels. As in all her novels, she mentions varieties of food items in this novel also. She shows amicable relation between the daughters and the mothers. Ms Rajora and Ishita and Ms Sabharwal and Shagun had good bondage between them. Except in a few instances, no disagreement was recorded. They acted according to the wishes of others. It was only that Sabharwal could do nothing to control her daughter, though she knew Raman was good. She tries to make her daughter realize the importance of her duty as a wife, but she fails. Finally she has to adjust with her new son-in-law. Kapur doesn’t show any communication between them as she had with Raman.

When Shagun wants to apply for divorce, her lawyer says to Ashok to think “mental cruelty, abuse, withholding financial support, in-law trouble, physical mistreatment” (149). Ashok knew very well that not even a single word is associated to Raman. Ms Sabharwal, on the other hand with blind love on her daughter says, “Raman Kaushik had many faults as a husband was now the party line” (242). Can Ms Sabharwal explain to the court what his faults were? The man, who looked after her like a son cannot be treated in such a way. Maybe she knew the fact, but she want her daughter to be safe at least with her new husband as she had her own fears. When Ashok had to go to U.S, she feels terrified at the thought what may happen to Shagun, if he leaves her. She knew the courts, petitions and children may not allow Shagun to move easily with Ashok.

Raman’s and Ishita’s generous heart were shown when they helped the flood victims. They helped the victims of Orissa cyclone. Ishita separated the items which would not be useful to the flood victims and some she gave to her servant maid and asked her to distribute them. At the
same time the owner of those items was enjoying with her new husband in New York not knowing and caring for her possessions. Once she is out from his family, Raman feels, “Once he had worshipped every inch of her body, covering it with kisses night after passionate. For a temporary infatuation, she had nullified their past, trampled on his home and set out to destroy him. There was poison in every inch of her” (209).

Kapur also adds a few humorous incidents in her novel. A miracle occurred in Swarag Nivas. In the society temple, Bhagwanji was drinking milk. A big crowd assembled near the society temple; they started to bring milk and formed a big queue. The excitement of the people knew no bounds. Some people are really excited at such instances. May be their personal traumas make them to search for a solution and when they have a chance they will rush to utilize it. She immediately ran to tell the matter to her daughter, but she knew that day the Gods were drinking milk everywhere in Delhi. The scientists mentioned it as a capillary action that milk spread on the surface of the stone images. May be Kapur has shown this incident, as people hope for miracles to happen like Ishita’s mother expects her daughter to have a baby.

Kapur refrains from judging her characters. Being a post-colonial writer, she gives post-colonial touch to her protagonists. She gives equal importance to the characters of Ishita and Shagun. Infidelity empowers a woman but infertility forbids her. Infertility may not always be the fault of the woman, but infidelity is the woman’s choice. Shagun feels that her life was a mere waste until she met Ashok. After she marries him and moves abroad, she changes into a self-reliant woman, who also enters to the import business with the help of her new husband. She fights for her children’s custody, though she doesn’t have much support from Ashok. She asserts her right as a mother and daughter. She takes her mother and children to America and makes them to enjoy the beauty of the country.

Ishita becomes hopeless due to her infertility. She couldn’t face the society as she was sent away from Surya Kanta’s house. She had none other than that family. When her mother looks for a husband for the second time and brings an IPS match, she declines the offer, because she doesn’t like him. Here Kapur shows how a man feels insecure of his wife’s infidelity. Ms Rajora wants her daughter to agree the proposal. Poor mother how innocent is she? After thirty years of her married life couldn’t she understand that a husband and wife should trust each other? How could Ms Rajora be so confident? Has Raman behaved in the same with Ishita as Shagun had left him? He never spoke a word about her either near his parents or his children.
Kapur’s novels portray non-identical characters in different situations. Virmati, Astha, Nisha, Nina, Ishita or Shagun, they want to assert their rights in the male dominated society. The paths they have chosen were different but their aim was one and the same. They don’t want to lead their lives against their inner emotional struggles. They either fought with their families or adjusted with them, but ultimately aimed for their happiness. Kapur is not partial towards her characters. She intelligently liberates her damsels in distress. What one wants to be would be decided by them. So they have to ultimately pay for their freedom or sacrifices.

The novelist focuses on a new point of infidelity and infertility in *Custody*. She shows the tribulations of the elders and the children, when a married woman breaks her marriage and looks for her freedom. The children are the worst sufferers who miss either the mother or the father. They have a part-time mother or a part-time father. Their education, career, health everything will be disturbed. All children cannot be intelligent and crafty like Arjun. The society may brand them as the children of the divorced parents. Not everyone will be lucky like Raman, who had found a great woman like Ishita in his life. His problems were solved because Ishita was a loving mother and caring wife.