

A Report on Debarati Das' Ph. D Thesis titled "The Image of Women in the Novels of Manju Kapur"

The scholar's choice of the most recent Indian English woman novelist, Manju Kapur, for her PhD is a bold endeavour as this might be a maiden attempt with regard to doing PhD on her novels. Though only a few scholars have worked for their M.Phil. on Manju Kapur, and limited secondary sources are available for her last two novels, the candidate has skilfully made an attempt, and this is a good contribution to the existing and limited criticism on Manju Kapur's novels.

The focus of the scholar on the thematic study, that is, the image of women in the novels of Manju Kapur is quite fitting as this is a dominant factor in her novels. The candidate's presentation of various images of women in Manju Kapur's novels *The Difficult Daughters* (Commonwealth Writers' Prize, 1999), *A Married Woman*, *Home*, *The Immigrant*, and *Custody* is quite interesting and the methodology she has adopted to trace the various stages of a woman which form the chapter titles is commendable.

The candidate has very well attempted, in the beginning of the introductory chapter, to offer a detailed explanation of what she means by the term *image*. Following this, the scholar has methodically analyzed the various images of women one can find in Indian literature and then in Indian English fiction. The candidate has quite aptly fixed Manju Kapur in the right context in the long line of Indian English novelists, and also has made a few references to the various images of women that emerge in the works of the other Indian English women novelists. The introductory chapter includes the literature survey, the candidate's justification of the choice of Manju Kapur, and so on.

The second chapter's focus on the childhood and adolescence in Manju Kapur's women characters brings out the innocent and inexperienced world of the girl child that is destroyed by the corrupt men and women, and the traumatic memories of childhood. These things make her struggle and suffer as a wife and as a mother. Manju Kapur's delineation of these experiences of children in the Indian society is realistic, and the image of women as children, as portrayed by Kapur, is very well presented by the candidate.

The third chapter, titled "Women in Marital Relationships", vividly describes the many facets of marital relationships of various women characters in Manju Kapur's novels. The candidate has rightly pointed out the complex marital relationships of many women characters from various perspectives. The observation of the scholar with respect to the happy married life stems from the indirect indication of the author through her characters that adjustments and compromises are what are needed.

The fourth chapter is a real breakthrough with respect to the general treatment of the image of women, as it deals with one of the propositions of subaltern studies. Viewing gender as a disabling agent is something challenging and thought provoking.

In the beginning of the fifth chapter, titled "On the Path of Liberation", the candidate has pointed out the various stands of Western feminists with respect to the freedom of women. And finally she has pointed out that the women characters of Manju Kapur are caught between tradition and modernity. The new woman Manju Kapur paints is

a woman who makes a compromise between tradition and modernity. Women's emancipation in the East differs from women's emancipation in the West owing to the cultural differences.

The concluding chapter has very well pointed out the gap between the literary (fictional) images of women and the real images of women that exist in the minds of the readers.

I am happy to point out that the researcher has faithfully followed the mechanics of writing outlined in MLA Handbook of Writers of Research Papers, seventh edition, published in 2009.

Based on the strengths of the thesis, it appears to me to be worth of commending and estimating as worthy of **high commendation**.

I have no hesitation in **commending the thesis without reservations** for the award of PhD Degree in English Literature in Bharathidasan University.

Athens, 24.01.2013.

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