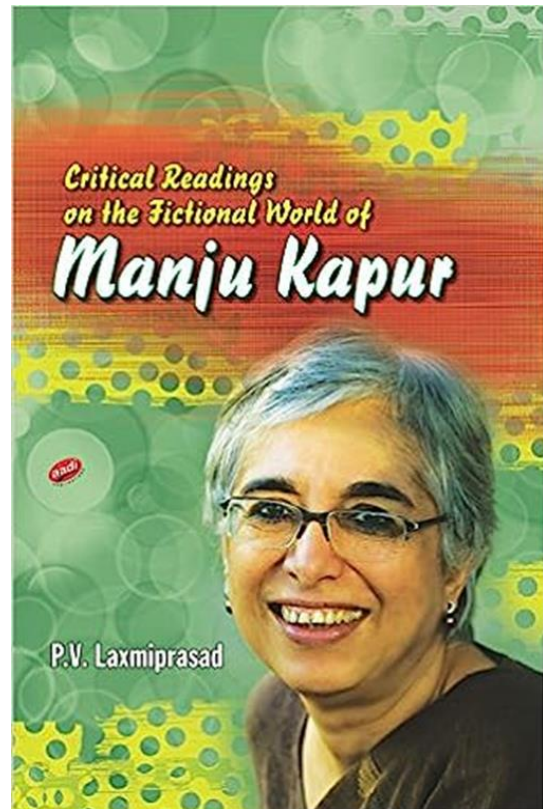


***Critical Readings on the Fictional World of Manju Kapur* by P. V. Laxmiprasad, Aadi Publishers, Jaipur, India 2016, ISBN: 978-93-82630-88-3, Price- 1,095.**

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P. V. Laxmiprasad is teacher by profession and a writer and critic by passion. A committed and industrious researcher, Dr. Laxmiprasad, comes out with works of art, both creative and critical, at regular intervals. His works include about 70 research papers, 50 book reviews, 120 poems and a score of books and book chapters. He has reached far and wide among the teachers and learners of literature across the globe through his works.

P.V. Laxmiprasad's work entitled on the Critical Readings on the Fictional World of Manju Kapur is an appreciable and welcome addition to the corpus of criticism in Indian English literature. Manju Kapur has already proved herself as one of the most accomplished Indian novelists in English



who depict precisely the predicaments of the female characters. She attempts to portray in her works the complexity of themes Indian sensibility the quest of self-assertion and the status of women in this patriarchal social set-up. She often deals with the existential predicament of woman that is embedded in the Indian social milieu where patriarchy is the order of the day. Her protagonists suffer from the problems of loneliness, alienation, and pessimism. Kapur's female characters are highly individualistic, sensitive, and mostly educated caught within the confines of a conservative society and struggle between tradition and modernity.

The book contains twenty-eight critical essays on the works of Manju Kapur, an authentic and articulative voice in Indian English literature, especially fiction. The book contains representative voices from different states across India. The author, P. V. Lakshmi Prasad has

taken enormous efforts to collect essays from scholars across the nation. There are voices from the Himachal Pradesh in the North to Tamil Nadu in the South. The essays deal with the entire gamut of Manju Kapur's fictional works: there are seven works that apprise *A Married Women*; eight essays about *Difficult Daughters*; six articles on *The Immigrant*; three about *Custody*; and two essays analyse *Home*. The critical essays in the book can be grouped into through three categories -- essays that deal with the issues of marriage, especially the status of women in married life; essays that analyse the notion of gender; and those that address the issues of Identity crisis faced by especially by the immigrant women.

Most of the essays in the book are critiques of *A Married Woman* from the point of view of gender and man-woman relationship: Dr. Sulakshana Sharma, in the opening chapter of the book, takes up for analysis *A Married Woman* and explicates how Kapur exposes gender discrimination is embedded in the Indian society that marginalizes women in the domestic and social arena. She also highlights that the subservient position of woman prevents her from being creative and proactive. "The Intricate Journey of a Dutiful Wife in Manju Kapur's *A Married Woman*" by S. Malathy stresses the need for a woman to be brave to overcome the hurdles on the paths of women. The author upholds Kapur's view that the woman, especially the married one, should not allow herself to be bound in the name of tradition. In the same vein Dr. V. Sunitha, in her article on *Married Woman* puts the ideal of Indian woman into question and points out how women are isolated in the name of idealization. Dr. Sunitha in her tightly-packed article examines the psychic and social conditions of woman in the light of the theory of Simon de Beavoir. Dr S Nagamani is article appreciates Manju Kapur's *A Married Woman* for the brilliant and precise portrait of the suffering of the majority of Indian women in their everyday life.

Another article entitled "Same Sex Love in ManJu Kapur's *A Married Woman*" by K.C. Asha approaches Kapur from a radical point of view. The article highlights, "in India, the homophobic, patriarchic society considers anything other than heterosexuality as unnatural and queer. Yet it cannot be denied that homosexuality had been in existence in the midst of heterosexual practices in India" (69). According to Kamala Rajan, Kapur stresses that even homosexual love is hegemonic as hetrerosexual. The article by Anitha Arul discusses the evolution of the modern woman in *A Married Woman* who finds a space for herself in the society no longer she is ready to tolerate a being a victim of tradition and patriarchy but is bold enough to overcome discrimination with her owns spirit. Dr. Sheela S. Nair delineates how the

institution of marriage is under the scanner in Manju Kapur's Home. She has encapsulated her ideas under the title, "Born Just to Marry and Carry: Women in Manju Kapur's Home." Dr. Sheela illustrates with a number of incidents from the novel how the subservience of women in the domestic life is always taken for granted not only by men but also by some women. She writes, "Kapur laughs at the notion that nothing but marriage brings a girl fulfillment" (14).

Gender issues are discussed also with reference to Manju Kapur's Custody: Dr. Janatha Kumari in her article about Custody examines the institution of marriage in the Indian context. With reference to the novel the author inspects how the image of woman has become stereotyped and fixed throughout the centuries because of the rules assigned to them by the society. Thus, the article is a critical notion of the gender in the patriarchal society. Dr. Sri Latha's article "Motherhood versus Freedom from Marriage in Manju Kapur's Custody" is interesting in the sense that it is an attempt to study how woman struggles to be free from the bondage of marriage and at the same time fight for their identity as a mother. Gobida Sahoo's essay on Custody examines the stressed relationship and the split in married life.

Another topic of discussion in the book is interpersonal conflict and generation gap: Dr. Poonam Dwivedi analyses the exploration of mother-daughter relationship in Kapur's *Difficult Daughters*. "Breaking and Bonding in Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters*" by Dr. Ruby Davaseeli is also an article about the issues of the women. According to Davaseeli, Kapur's novel *Difficult Daughters* "focuses on women's awareness of the predicament, her wanting to be recognized as a person than as a woman and wanting to have an independent social image" (56). The article appreciates Kapur's attempt to project a new sense of woman's identity that has transformed her status from the victimized to triumphed and her portrayal of mother-daughter relation trip in the novel. Dr. Palakurthy Dinakar has contributed an article on *Difficult Daughters*. The article exalts Kapur for representing three generations of woman characters and also for showing the evolution of womanhood over the generations. Arabati Pradeep Kumar analyses *Difficult Daughters* from feminist, sociological, and political perspectives and she points out that Kapur's chief concern is "about the problems of the newly-changing urban middle class women" (184). Dr. T. Jeevan Kumar appreciates *Difficult Daughters* for its bringing a change in the position of woman and exposes how Kapur breaks the conventional notion of woman: "there is a man within every woman and a woman in every man, when manhood is questioned and womanhood is fragile" (204). Dr. Vijaya Babu analyses *Difficult Daughters* for the theme of gender and identity. Dr. Lily Arul Sharmila applauds

Manju Kapur as a “promising voice amongst the women writers in a vast firmament of Indian literary tradition” (233). Dr. K. Padmaja’s “Polarized Women of Manju Kapur in Difficult Daughters and Home” observes the variety of women presented and represented in the fictional world of Manju Kapur: “Women of different ages, different roles as daughters, mothers, and wives, of different geographical, social, and familial backgrounds and of different emotional and psychological dispositions inhabit the fictional world of Manju Kapur” (221).

The book also accommodates a few articles that scrutinize the issues of the migrant women in the novels Manju Kapur. “Existential Dilemma in Manju Kapur’s *The Immigrant*” by Candy D’Cunha is a review of the predicament of the migrant woman. Dr. Abida Farooqui analyses the issues of the migrant woman from feminist point of view. She throws light on the physical and psychological connection between the land and the woman, especially the migrant woman. The theme of quest for identity is explored by Vadlamani Padma in her “Quest for Identity in Manju Kapur’s *The Immigrant*.” C. Lekshmi Prasad’s article also analyses “the dilemmas, trauma and identity crisis” faced by the immigrants with reference to *The Immigrant*. A. Naveena in her paper entitled “Becoming a Woman – A reading of Manju Kapur’s *The Immigrant*” appreciates how Kapur’s works “cut across the boundaries of feminism.”

The book contains a psychoanalytic study by Dr. Anantha Lakshmi Hemalatha. Dr. Hemalatha examines Manju Kapur’s *Home* in the light of Freudian theory of psychoanalysis and touches upon the theme child abuse. Dr. B. Nagamani makes an attempt to compare the protagonists of Manju Kapur and Jhumpa Lahiri; Astha in *A Married Woman* and Gauri in *The Lowland*. “Cultural Politics in the Novels of Manju Kapur” by S. Karthik Kumar tries to show how Manju Kapur is a spokesperson for the middle-class women and justifies the fact that Kapur is compare with Jane Austen.

Thus, *Critical Readings on the Fictional World of Manju Kapur* accommodates comprehensive and multi-dimensional scholarly responses to the fictional works of Manju Kapur. Manju Kapur’s diverse qualities as a creative writer are well brought by the authors who have contributed. The author’s role as a missionary against abuses of woman in the name of gender and tradition is also highlighted by the scholarly articles. To sum up, P. V. Laxmiprasad’s *Critical Readings on the Fictional World of Manju Kapur* is a fitting tribute to a great contemporary writer, Manju Kapur.