

**Commentary on “Kang Kyong-ae and her Novel  
“Human Problem”  
by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Svetla Karteva–Dancheva**

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Dr. Karteva-Dancheva introduces in her in-depth paper the works of Kang Kyong-ae - one of the most prominent women writer in the modern Korean literature of the 1930-s, who “is often singled by literary critics as an exceptional realistic woman writer of the colonial period” (p. 2). In the focus of Karteva’s detailed analyses is her novel “Human Problem” (“Ingan munje”), published in 1934 and evaluated as one of the master-pieces of the Korean “women’s literature” of the last century.

At the beginning of her paper Dr. Karteva depicts in brief the social, political and cultural context during Korean colonial occupation by Japan in the first decades of twentieth century, which gave the outline of the main trends in the development of the modern Korean fiction. In this way the author proves the statement that the rise of novel in Korea in the 1920-s and in the 1930-s was not purely literal phenomenon, it was a social phenomenon as much fulfilling important social and political needs.

Karteva stresses also the role of the communist movements and ideas in that time which exercised their strong influence upon the Korean works of fiction in the 1930-s.

But the specificity of the attitude towards the main social and political tendencies in the society and of the ideas, expressed in this novel, have been preconditioned by the fact that “Kang Kyong-ae published the novel “Ingan munje” (“Human problem”) when Communism was clearly failing in Korea” (p. 5).

The most valuable part of this remarkable paper is the literary interpretation of the plot and of the three main characters in Kang Kyong-ae’s novel (Sonbi, Chotchae and Sinch’ol), which reveals the deep meaning of the narrative, the maturity of Kang Kyong-ae’s vision, concerning the present social and individualistic problems and her awareness of the challenges of the present time. As Karteva wrote “Kang Kyong-ae recognizes some of the major problems plaguing the Korean society in the 1930-s. She describes the issues in terms of a peasant and proletariat problem“ (p. 10). I would like to stress especially the skillful analyses of the miseries and sorrow, struggle and failure of Sonbi, the main famine character in the novel.

In conclusion it can be said that this thorough literary analyses is representative of such a scholar and expert in the field of Korean literature as Assoc. Prof. Dr. Swetla Karteva-Dancheva.