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CONTENTS

Sr. No.	Author	Title of the Paper	Page No.
1	Chiya Parvizpur & Fazel Asadi Amjad	The Unconscious Criticality of Wright's Native Son to Capitalism	1
2	B.A. Tina Zahel & Prof. Dr. Franz Josef Gellert	Ageing Workers in SMEs and the Influence on Corporate's Internationalization	12
3	Mimita Sachdeva	Life Skills and the Autistic Child	26
4	Talluri Mathew Bhaskar	The Fire and the Rain: A Myth Retold	29
5	Dr. Ankita Khanna	Assessments beyond Writing: An Attempt to Provide a Fair Chance to the Learners	44
6	Dr. Meetakshi Pant	Total Factor Productivity and Financial Structure of Steel Industry	49
7	Ashish Kumar	Carelessness of Man's Mind: a Study of Albert Camus's the Stranger	62
8	Dr. Manju Lalwani Pathak	Debunking the image of Sindhis as Refugees	68
9	Rita Malache	Approaches of tribal development: A critical Perspective	72
10	Prof. Dr. Patil Vijaykumar Ambadasrao	Wendy Wasserstein's An American Daughter: An Analysis	82

11	Dr. Khandekar Surendra Sakhar	Portrayal of Relations and Globalization in Kiran Desai's Novel 'The Inheritance of Loss'	89
12	Dr. Rakseh Rai	A Study of Social Intelligence among College Students of Tura (West Garo Hills) in Meghalaya	95
13	Prof. Vijay D. Songire	Male Sufferers in Toni Morrison's The Bluest Eye, Sula and Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things	109
14	Prof. R.Y. Shinde & Dr. Archana Durgesh	Vijay Tendulkar's His Fifth Woman: A Brief Introduction	116
15	Prof. (Dr) Mala Tandon	Alternate Schooling and Teacher Education: Issues, Challenges and Priorities	122
16	Dr. J. Thirumaran	A study on three leading stochastic Optimization methods in simulation	130
17	Dr Tanu Tandon Mr. Durgesh Pathak	Media and Education: Pathways to End Women Violence	135
18	K. Ravi Sankar & Dr. V. B. Chithra	The Inner Awareness of the Human Soul: A Study of the Apprentice	139
19	Dr. Vitthal V. Parab	A Socio-Literary Perspective in the Novels of Jhumpa Lahiri & Bharati Mukherjee	147

Media and Education: Pathways to End Women Violence

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Abstract

The status of woman in India is sort of a Paradox. If on one hand she is at the peak of success, on the other hand she is lying at the end of social equality ladder, suffering silently. Discrimination and violence against them starts even before their birth and continues throughout their life, with its form and intensity changing. Women violence is result of social dynamics which exist in our society and have been passed from generations to generations. What is required is to create awareness among women about their rights and also to educate them about violence and ways to eliminate them. This paper talks about various theories about women violence and also discusses the role of media and education to end women violence.

Key Words: Women Violence, Status of Women, Media , Education, Awareness

The status of woman in India is sort of a Paradox. If on one hand she is at the peak of success, on the other hand she is lying at the end of social equality ladder, suffering silently. In a country where women deities are worshipped, a culture where women are revered as mothers and wives and in a political system where six of the key positions are held by woman, many women still have little say over their lives. Women in India are still largely considered as second class citizens incapable of making decisions.

The society, which worships women as Devi, does not hesitate to kill her, the men who take blessings of Devi, treat the women of household as their slaves or 'Dasi'. The land of "Jhansi ki Rani" and "Razia Sultan" is also the land of "Sati" and "Dowry deaths".

Discrimination and violence against them starts even before their birth and continues

throughout their life, with its form and intensity changing. Female foeticide, early marriage, early and frequent child Birth, torture, rape, molestation, domestic violence, the ways are different but all aimed towards subjugation and oppression of women, leading to decline in their population, thereby widening the male-female ratio, making women more vulnerable to violence and also making their representation lesser and meeker in society, giving them status of minority.

Since ages women have been at the receiving end of violence. Violence is a coercive mechanism to assert ones will over another, in order to prove or feel a sense of power. The violence against women, be it any form, springs from the structure of patriarchy, defined broadly as a system of male dominance legitimated within the family and society through superior rights, authority and power. The process of subordination of women is

achieved by devaluing women's contribution, while at the same time extracting a significant contribution from them, and also through a powerful ideology of rigidly assigned roles for women, which act as boundaries for all their actions.

Status of Women in India

It's important to look at the status of women in India, in terms of their status, education, health, crime against them and more. Some of them are

Demography and Health

Sex ratio indicates, the declining population of girls as compared to boys, showing apathy towards girl child be it in the infancy stage or at adolescent age. Maternal health care situation is alarming, with 254 maternal deaths per 100,000, Live births. Only 62.2 % women have been found to take decisions on their own, about their health. Women have B.M. I of less than normal and 38.80 % women suffer from chronic energy deficiency (CED) as per the data made available, 59% rural and 54% urban women suffer from Anemia, Out of 2.31 million AIDS cases reported in India, 39 % of them are women, women, because of their bodily constitution and subjugated place in family and society, they are more prone to infection. In addition to this, poor health services, nutrition, early marriage and mother hood, lack of sanitation and awareness about contraceptives and other precautions, add to the vulnerable conditions of women.

Education

Lack of Education makes women more susceptible and vulnerable to

Victimization. Total literacy rate in India as per data available in 2001, is 65.38%, out of which , literacy rate of women is just 54.16% as compared to 75.86% of men. A study done (1999-2006) to find out the reasons for not attending school, revealed various reasons for dropout of girls from school, ranging from education being expensive (in terms of trail cost etc), to requirement of girl child at home, to look at household work and take care of younger siblings. Education is still considered unnecessary for girls, as facts revealed, parents still think a girls' place is at home.

Crime Against women

Despite the existence of number of legislations providing protection to women, crime against women has increased. As per the statistics available in the year 2007, total 185,312 crimes were reported against women where as in the year 2008, total 195,856 crimes were reported, recording an increase by 5.7%. Majority of the crimes against women are caused by members of their families itself like 41.5% of crimes are of torture and cruelty by husband and family members and 20.6 % are of molestation, which is also dome by close family members most often. A woman is not safe anywhere, neither on streets nor at home. Her plight is same and is on the rise, in spite of several efforts done by Government for the upliftment of women.

The forms of violence directed against women like rape, sexual exploitation, and domestic violence all are aimed at subjugation of women.

Violence against women then has to be seen in the context of Indian society in transition which has committed itself to

the values of equality and justice, but which is unable to make the dominant socio-economic segments and the male population relinquish their traditionally held rights and power over the weaker segments and women. In many spheres of life, such as marriage customs, occupations norms of everyday social behaviour, there is a cultural lag and even a back lash when the powerless group seek to demand their available rights. Violence thus becomes both a symptom and cause of social tension.

Theoretical Perspective on women Violence

Violence against women is result of our social system and mind set of people in general. If we look at various theories given to explain violence against women we realize its roots lie in social fabric and male dominated patriarchal society.

Evolutionary theories

Early evolutionary theories argued that male violence was rooted in genetics and biology due to natural selection pressure (Deutsch, 1944) and that rape in particular was a reproductive strategy (Thornhill & Thornhill, 1992). More current efforts still invoke constructs such as genetic determinism and sexual selection to account for gendered patterns of behaviour (Buss, 1987) still relies primarily on biological assumptions, although acknowledging environmental factors.

Victim-precipitation theories

These theories similarly examined the behaviours of women that "caused" them (Amir, 1971), or their children (Schonberg, 1992), to be victimized. However, research has failed to identify specific personality and attitudinal characteristics that make

certain women more vulnerable to battering. Rather, situational features of women's lives, not character facets, have been related to histories of physical, emotional, or sexual abuse (Pitman & Taylor, 1992).

Social learning theories

Developed primarily out of Bandura's (1973) research, these theories focus on the socialization experiences of men that lead them to be violent toward women. Work in this arena has focused on modelling influences, reinforcement for aggressive behaviour, and attitudes and beliefs that mediate violence.

Social information processing theories

These approaches to violence against women have focused on the cognitive processes involved in an aggressive episode. These models give us details on how individuals' mental representations of cultural scripts develop and how they come to filter and bias the encoding and decoding of information.

Socio-cultural theories

Socio-cultural theories tend to rely on macro-level analyses and examine structural features of a society that could account for differences in rates of violence against women in different social groups. Explanations lie in examining the effects of racism, sexism, social disorganization, unemployment, economic inequality, and alienating conditions of urban life. These theories suggest that violence may serve a social function and/or be reflective of a culture of violence.

Role of Media and Education in ending women violence

Above theories clearly indicate that women violence is result of social

dynamics which exist in our society and have been passed from generations to generations. What is required is to create awareness among women about their rights and also to educate them about violence and ways to eliminate them. Women, most of the times view violence against them as part of their life, thing associated with them because of their being a girl. Many women consider verbal violence and physical abuse as acceptable norm as they have seen their mothers, sisters suffering. Even in society at large, eve teasing, violence at work place, sexual abuse are seen by girls as part and package of their lives and because of social stigma and fear attached to it they seldom complain.

Education is a very important tool to create awareness among women about the types of violence they suffer through, the ways through which they can protect themselves.

There are various laws and acts made to protect women from violence and abuse, various government schemes have been launched for the benefit of women.

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Women are unaware of these and continue to suffer at the hands of people and society at large, taking it as their destiny. Education can help in educating women, creating awareness among them about their rights, about various organizations and help line which can help them. It can also sensitize society, men and women both about the plight of women, the harmful and scary effects of women violence. Education also helps in dispelling age old traditions and myths which perpetuate violence against women, creating an equal and just society.

Media has a very important role in dispelling myths and bringing awareness among women about various rights and provisions made for them. One such big effort has been done by 1090 women help line, which is there to protect women and media has been instrumental in spreading awareness about this in society. Thus both media and education are chief instruments in spreading awareness, creating opinion and changing mind set of people and society at large thus acting as agents of social change.

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