

Abstract

Mapping Gender and Violence: Assault, Abuse and Trauma in Select Plays of Indian Women Writers

Violence against women constitutes a significant concern in contemporary India. This issue is rooted in patriarchal beliefs that perpetuate power and gender inequalities. The present research examines various forms of violence as depicted in selected plays by Indian women writers, organized into seven chapters, including an introduction and a conclusion. The introduction delineates the evolution of theatrical works and the emergence of Indian women playwrights, emphasizing their contributions to both society and literature. It also addresses contemporary themes and the impact of select playwrights on the theatrical landscape. Chapter II, titled “Gender and Trauma: Theoretical Framework,” analyses how power dynamics related to gender lead to the subjugation and exploitation of women. This chapter explores how the research utilises the concepts of objectification and trauma theory to examine the exploitation of women’s bodies and its impact on their psyche. It employs objectification to illustrate the perception of women as objects valued primarily for their physical appearance, rather than their intrinsic worth. Additionally, trauma theory is integrated to explore the psychological effects experienced by victims, emphasizing trauma as a significant event that disrupts normal coping mechanisms.

Chapter III concentrates on child sexual abuse, specifically analysing Dina Mehta’s play *Getting Away With Murder*, which highlights the power imbalances that facilitate such abuse, particularly against young girls. This chapter further underscores how societal gender disparities contribute to the prevalence of sexual abuse and discusses the coping mechanisms that victims employ to address their trauma, which often extends into later

stages of development. Chapter IV investigates the interplay between power dynamics, gender bias, and domestic violence, utilising Poile Sengupta's play *Mangalam* to illustrate the objectification and mistreatment of women by family members. The chapter assesses the psychological effects of domestic violence on women and examines their coping strategies to endure the traumatic experiences inherent in their situations.

Chapter V addresses the critical issue of gang rape within the context of Manjula Padmanabhan's play *Lights Out*, emphasizing the objectification and violation of women's bodies by perpetrators. It highlights the pervasive fear instilled in women by such acts and their profound impact on victims' lives, while also considering the perspective of a witness reflecting on the victim's suffering. Chapter VI explores the grim realities of women in cyberspace, as portrayed in Anupama Chandrasekhar's play *Free Outgoing*. It underscores the severe repercussions of revenge pornography on victims and their families, jeopardizing their future. Moreover, this chapter critically examines societal tendencies to perpetuate gender bias. The conclusion posits that societal transformation is essential to eradicate violence against women, achievable through education that reveals the socially constructed nature of gender norms and emphasizes the importance of male respect for women and their emotions. Furthermore, robust familial and social support systems are crucial for victims, equipping them with the emotional resources necessary to cope with trauma and reclaim their voices.