

# Culticultural Problem of Woman's Position in Society and Family in Focus of Literary Studies and Medicine

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## Abstract

A new systemic pattern of perception of social and cultural problem of woman's position in the family and society based on analytical data of literary studies and medicine is proposed in the article. A typology of the problem of women's rights restriction in the society, violence against them, feminism is in the focus of attention. The study is carried out with the account of diachrony and synchrony against the broad historical and cultural, and social and cultural backgrounds. Up-to-date information on gender psychology and socioculturology of a modern society is involved.

**Keywords:** gender, woman's position in the family and society, multicultural situation, violence problem, feminism issues, medicine, literary studies

## 1. Introduction: Preamble and Issues of Humanitarian (Literary) and Medical Research Methodology

At the present stage of the society and culture development, the way of understanding and solving of many problems requires synthesis of various sciences data. The union of humanitarian knowledge and medicine is one of the most ancient: from systems of philosophy of Ancient Egypt and India to modern projects in Internet ("Literature and Medicine" Journal). A comprehensive study of the civilization culture stages gives much as well (Note 1). The association between humanitarian and natural-and- medical approaches existed in University education of the Modern Age as early as the XIX-beginning of the XX centuries (Smirnov, 1893; 1894; 1899).

Both literary studies and medicine pursue systemic consideration and solving of social and cultural life problems in keeping with complementary sciences. Consistently, the modern gender (Note 2) problem brought humanitarians and natural scientists as well to the perception of sociology and political science when studying woman's existence in social, and family and living environment. A well-known specialist in study of literature of the Kazan school of the XX century Galina Vishnevskaya (Note 3) emphasized two points: a) "... the type of the state depends on the type of hearth and home" (Vishnevskaya, 1952, p. 450); b) "... the woman development is closely associated with moral and even political development of the mankind" (Vishnevskaya, 1952, p. 450).

Studying the problem of woman's position in the family and society both literary studies and medicine refer to a historical context. A humanitarian point of view reveals the culture diachrony and the origin of the problem. A medical point of view is focused on the sociodynamics of nowadays required for solving modern peculiarities of the problem. A dialog with up-to-date scientific data is significant in both cases. The Volga region of Russia has established scientific traditions in this field resulting from the cultures dialog context and multicultural situation (Note 4).

## 2. Method and Basic Theoretic Concepts

Scientific and research methodology of literary studies and medicine has much in common. A genetic approach to evolution of a certain event and historical comparison of social and cultural sphere processes in synchrony and diachrony prevail (from Kazan literary studies: (Voronova et al., 2011, p. 230; Amineva, 2014, p. 2094).

Violence against women should be understood to mean, first of all, the system of such public relations, when certain individuals or groups (more often-men) overmaster a woman and women as belonging to socially opposite gender. In modern sociology violence against a woman is seen as an event essentially different from

other forms of abuse. One must admit that the fundamental cause and source are not only and not so much sex or unmotivated aggression as a pursuit of power. In this light, violence against women should be understood as one of the gender stratification measurements. Eventually, the studied forms of violence appear as a variety of relations of power, being unfair to women and doing economic, social, psychical and psychological harm to them.

Paternalistic relationships of power (the mastery of mature adult will over immature children's one) or legal coercion specified by a preliminary agreement are not abusive. The reason is that in such a case consent to exercise of power and coercion is obtained (or could be obtained) from those persons against whom it is directed. Whereas violence is an action, consent to which could not be obtained from the other party of relationships from the beginning and without reservation since such actions are with aims, rights and interests of the subjects towards whom they are directed? The concept of "obtained consent" in situations of violence against women, which we studied, should be supplied with such important criterion of the international legislation as admission of the fact of cruel treatment of one person by another person. And this will be the main classification criterion.

The consideration of violence against women as a medico-social problem assumes in addition to the above a distinction between two typological varieties of this event as well. On the one hand, it may concern isolated acts of natural human aggression as of a living being. This aspect of the problem is in the subject field of the criminalists' analysis. On the other hand, institutionalized forms of abuse, which are the act of conscious will and claim to their validity in terms of viability, the good, justice or naturality, propriety and unpunishability should be taken into account, and that is more significant for us. In such cases violence and coercion against a woman acquire the properties of immanence of human communications in the eyes of abuser. It can be explicit physical cruelty-beating, food restrictions, sexual offences, non-cooperation, prohibitions and threats. However, there are more complex forms. One should distinguish between the following main forms: fashion and beauty standards; oppressive ideals of motherhood, monogamy, chastity and heterosexuality; sexual harassment at work; rules dictated by gynecology, obstetrics and psychotherapy; free hard housework and a low-paid job.

After merging together all specified aspects and features, it seems appropriate to give the following definition of the central theoretical problem, which is of interest to us in the given article. Violence against women is such public relationships, when an individual (or a group) by means of external constraint, cruel treatment, established social norms overmaster intentionally a woman (or women) in public or private (family) spheres as socially belonging to opposite gender infringing her rights and interests, causing her physical, psychological and social damage, renouncing subjective female independence.

### **3. Problems of Deprivation of Women's Rights, Violence against Women and Strategies of Feminist Movement: Main Results of Analytical Review**

The problem of woman's position in the family and society is caused by a number of factors. This system, which aims at solving internal conflicts and tension, is characterized by a trinomial: woman's social and moral deprivation of rights and consequently violence against a woman, feminism and the ways out of this situation.

The woman's subjection in the family was and is still under the pressure of a range of circumstances. Among the first of them is a tradition to perceive a woman as "a family member" rather than an equal "member of the society". Modern socio-medical investigations explain this fact by steady negative mentality features of Russia (Note 5) (Women and violence, 2002, pp. 212-218). There are also gender backgrounds (Note 6) (Lauretis, 2007, p. 423; Maccoby & Jacklin, 2009, p. 315; Muslimova & Khusainova, 2013, pp. 43-45). The lag of education from female personality peculiarities, her needs is of no less importance. Such social biases as violence, decline in morals, and breakdown of family bonds aggravate this situation as well. (Vishnevskaya, 1952, p. 450). In this case a woman's nature was contrary to such environment: she has been aimed at dominant position in spiritual life of the society thanks to "...rich inner world, ... humane feelings and "smart heart..." (Vishnevskaya, 1952, p. 450) (Note 7). And the process of national culture formation is impossible without the society's attention to a woman's self-enrichment (Vishnevskaya, 1952, p. 450).

Prohibition of unequal/forced marriages in the reforms of Peter I, whose ideas were elaborated by Russian enlighteners of the first third of the XVIII century (Kantemir et al.), became one of the solutions (Vishnevskaya, 1952, pp. 7-12). The institution of marriage is inserted in socio-economic conditions. The results obtained by humanitarians and medical professionals are identical: "the origin of a family was defined by the level of the economic development of the people: the lower ...it is, the more imperfect ... forms of marriage are, ... the society deprived a woman of the opportunity to obtain serious education, develop natural instincts, broaden the range of her interests" (Note 8). These processes reflect such concepts as "domestic abuse" (Note 9) and "victimization" (potential predisposition to violence) in medical works (Mendelson, 1987, pp. 45-62). In 95 % of

family (domestic) abuse cases a man acts as an aggressor, and a woman as an affected party. According to sociomedical investigations the basic causes are as follows: unstable social environment, poor living conditions, unemployment and poverty, basic sexual and social miseducation (or its lack), diseases, negative examples of parents' life (Violence and social changes, 2000).

Nowadays, as a socio-medical analysis of the situation shows, the society cannot often provide security of family members within the family. Domestic violence against women occurs in every fourth family; in 35.7% of cases it is committed against pregnant women.

Reproductive health of Russian women living in major industrial cities is characterized on the whole by unfavorable factors. A psychological constituent prevails in the structure of domestic aggression towards women; physical abuse occurs twofold less often. Every fifth victim experiences sexual aggression, and every ninth victim - economical one. The better part of women-the victims of domestic violence, are younger than 30 years old and have insufficient experience of family life; 52.4% of women live in the first, unregistered marriage; in half of the families, the material wealth is provided by men creating a status of dependence for a woman.

The leading positions among factors contributing to initiation of domestic violence against women belong to experience of violence gained by a husband (a partner) in childhood, unregistered marriage, unsatisfactory material wealth, pregnancy.

A little number of crisis centers (not in all territories) and special public organizations in the country render support to women suffering from domestic violence. The main areas of their activities are prevention of violence against women and victims' rehabilitation. The functions of such organizations also include: legal and psychological support for women and a family; implementation of educational projects for clients and specialists on the problems of violence; publishing and other information work.

Thus, violence against women should be associated "... with economic, political, social factors, the whole system of societal beliefs, standards and cultural values as reference points, rather than with individual problems..." (Sabirov, 2005, p. 191).

Violence in primary family and domestic sphere is also seen through the system of distortions in woman's education/upbringing. A socio-literary analysis of the prior context proves that the girls' upbringing was, more often than not, between two extremes. On the one hand, "conceptual idealism" (according to I. A. Krylov, "the blaze of the hairdressing civilization") cultivated "independently of the family and society atmosphere" (Vishnevskaya, 1952, p. 450) (Note 10). On the other hand, frequently, actual severe abuse including the latter in "marriages of convenience", instead of religious and moral concept of "... uniting people understanding each other" (Vishnevskaya, 1952, p. 450).

From the first half of the XIX century disputes on the issues of unfair attitude of society towards women, violation against them, looking for the ways of their liberation arose on the pages of such Russian journals as "Moskovskii Zritel" ("Moscow Spectator"), "Otechestvennye Zapiski" ("Annals of the Fatherland"), "Sovremennik" ("The Contemporary") and others in response to that. Discussions on female emancipation gripped the attention of Russian society. Much was governed by the impact of the ideas of Sensimonism (the center-French editions: "Revue Etrangere", "Courier de beau Monde", "Revue de Paris"). At the same time, ties between philology and medicine extended due to Russian "natural school".

Feminist conceptions organize the system of woman's "ascent" as follows: acknowledgement of women's rights-upbringing and education in the conditions of physical, material and spiritual-and-psychological freedom-involvement in the creative activities of the society-entering an active area of the society, women's engagement in socially beneficial activities and in the fields of the society spiritual ambitions (Vishnevskaya, 1952, pp. 119-120). Modern science notes in this respect the importance of "female" literature too (Vowles, 1994, pp. 35-60).

The integral feminist movement started from 1970-ies. Thus far it is a complex and dynamic event. Its main features are the pronounced interdisciplinary nature (combination of data on anthropology, philosophy, history, medicine, literature, political science, and psychology), the synthesis of micro- and macro-social relations analysis, contextual and axiological methodology of cognition (New Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2001).

It is significant to compare present conceptions about feminism typology with understanding of a female phenomenon in literature of the Modern Age. Thus, psychoanalytical feminism (the fear of death, dual sexual relations) (Sabirov, 2005, pp. 20-22) is associated with seeking and striving of Russian sentimentalists of the XVIII-XIX centuries (Breuillard, 1999, pp. 45-58; Nebel, 2005, p. 195; Pashkurov, 2010, p. 127) and with interpretations of Lavater's psychoanalytical heritage in many respects (Heier, 1991, pp. 6-36). The radical

feminism conception is closer to sociology, evolution of criticism and journalism: the main thing is the issues of women's struggle against the patriarchal structure as a primary conservative system of disparity and oppression (Sabirov, 2005, pp. 22-23). Socio-historical dynamics of journal discussions held in the middle of the XIX century shows "... acute indignation against men, demanding humble dependence and implicit submission to their judgments from women" (Vishnevskaya, 1952, p. 43).

The backgrounds of the third feminism variation, the dialectical one, are also formed in the sociocultural space in a dialog with global thinking. Therefore there is a special term of "intersection theory" in medicine, when the issues of relationship between gender and age, region, class, race peculiarities are in the focus of attention (Psychology Today, 1998) (Note 11).

#### **4. Discussion (Approbation)**

A medical constituent of the studies carried out by the authors of the given research was tested at the Ninth International Congress of the Pediatricians of Russia (2004, Moscow), as well as at the meetings of the Health Administration in the Republic of Tatarstan (for the period from 2002 to 2004). The analysis of the medico-demographic situation in the Republic of Tatarstan and Volga region on the main factors of the population reproductive health and behavior was also carried out. The findings of this level of the carried out study are implemented and used successfully in the work of the women's health clinics, maternity obstetric centers, in the municipal polyclinic network of Tatarstan, in the work of a number of social institutions and rehabilitation centers of the social services office.

A philological humanitarian constituent of the carried out developments marked as the given theme was tested many times in the course of joint projects of the Kazan University with the Institute of Slavistics (Giessen, Germany). Among the main results are: the grant-project implemented by a creative team of the Chair of History of Russian Literature of the Kazan University; a multi-authored monograph "Russian literary studies at the Kazan University (1806-2009)" (2011 год); a series of articles in national press of the Russian Federation (in the journal "Филологос", in particular).

#### **5. Some Conclusions and Perspectives**

Our review shows that the problem of a woman's position in the society and family is at the same time one of the central and the most pressing problems of sociocultural, and spiritual and cultural development of the society in its synchrony and diachrony. The synthesis of the points of view of philological knowledge and medicine with respect to this issue allows to make a conclusion that both external and internal factors, such as family upbringing-during the years of female personality formation, education as the beginning of the society dialog with a woman and establishing of psychological equality between women and men as an essential basis are of equal significance to the investigators. It should contribute to genesis and evolution of a woman's intellectual and moral character. Socioeconomic, legal, and psychological support is equally important (Note 12). The next appropriate stage is elimination of all types of abuse from domestic to societal one. According to V. G. Belinsky, the highest step is the return of the most important role of a creator and guardian of moral foundations, the role of "human in human formation" to a woman by culture and society. Excursus into theory and historical background, both from humanitarian-and-philological and medical points of view, allows seeing the increase of recognition of moral and psychological constituent as a dominant in diachrony. Sociopolitical and legal reforms are effective thereupon. Mobile forms of the society support, such as social and legal, medical and religious ones are actual and vital (Note 13).

Thus:

1) The problem of domestic violence should be regarded in the society as a negative social event claiming attention of the State. Only an integrated approach to the problem of female victims of aggression can change the professional practice. The interdisciplinary approach should envisage a joint work of medical workers, lawyers, psychologists, social workers and representatives of a number of other specialties with the purpose of forming a holistic approach to each individual case of violence against a woman and understanding of the victim's needs.

2) The following should be of key importance in the system of prevention of family abuse and rehabilitation of female victims of domestic violence at the regional and municipal levels:

- crisis centers and public organizations rendering psychological, emotional, legal and information support for women and children in critical situations on hot lines, in the course of personal consultations and in the support groups;
- in-patient departments-shelters for temporary stay of women and women with children in case of domestic violence;

- "protection warrant" given by police, which gives a woman leaving her offender certain safety conditions.
- 3) The study of disciplines on the problems of domestic violence against women and children is to be provided in educational programs for graduate students in the course of post-diploma training of primary care physicians, in particular.
- 4) The internal mechanisms of family abuse and existence of barriers in the form of public stereotypes impeding productive preventive work with patients should be taken into account when carrying out of rehabilitation work with female victims of abuse. On revealing cases of domestic violence it is of crucial importance to provide women with information on available public centers, where the victims of abuse will be rendered support.
- Feminist tendencies should bring the society back to harmony, when controversies will be either approved (the dialectics of sex ratio), or substantially settled (imperfection of the society social structure as "a leverage" of radical feminism).

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## Notes

- Note 1. Study of their dynamics-refer to (Michand, 1981; Erasov, 2002), in terms of medical knowledge: (Ford, 1998)
- Note 2. Using the example of regularities of cultural process in Russia: (Women Writers in Russian Literature, 1994; Women in Nineteenth-Century Russia, 2012)
- Note 3. On the scientist’s heritage: (Voronova & Sidorova et al., 2011, pp. 113-114)
- Note 4. On gender, race and region interactions-refer to the following concepts: Amott-Mathhaei (1991), Dill (1994); Goodwin (1994), Rueschemeyer (1994)-review: (Sabirov, 2005, pp. 23-25); in terms of cultures’ dialog in Tatarstan-(Nigmatullina, 1997)
- Note 5. Famous “formulas” about the husband’s attitude to his wife: “If he beats her, it means that he loves her”, “If he beats her, it means that he teaches her”, “He is the husband, and hence he has the right to do it!”
- Note 6. Violence basis-both male qualities (aggression/ambitiousness, cruelty, rudeness, egocentrism), and female ones (timidity, sense of dependence, submissiveness, weakness, superstitiousness and anxiety)
- Note 7. Viewpoint of Russian enlightener of the XVIII century-N. I. Novikov
- Note 8. According to conceptions of I. A. Krylov and A. N. Raditshev: (Vishnevskaya, 1952, pp. 27-29).
- Note 9. Domestic abuse with increasing cycle frequency of “physical, verbal, spiritual and economic abuse for the purpose of control, intimidation and horrification”: (Sabirov, 2005, pp. 87-88)
- Note 10. Closed “female” institutions reviving in Russia are worth to be analyzed
- Note 11. In the first third of the XIX century the women themselves took an active part in formation of backgrounds for such feminism (E. Bezdolnaya in her version of the novel “Strega” by E. Fuine (1834) refuted the conception of “the inferiority/imperfection of female intelligence”) from socioscientific and psychological perspective (Vishnevskaya, 1952, pp. 86-89)
- Note 12. On centers of psychological support in modern urban complexes-refer to: (Sabirov, 2005)
- Note 13. There are special rehabilitation centers “Fatyma” (Kazan), “Nika” and “Femina” (Naberezhnye Chelny) in the Republic of Tatarstan.

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