

Caste-based Violence against Women: Emerging Solidarity Politics of Social Justice

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Abstract:

This article develops a Dalit feminist paradigm for social justice that includes elements of caste-based violence. Given the historical and interdisciplinary feminist analysis of what kind of feminist solidarity is currently possible, I take caste-based violence as a social problem, arguing that it is possible to act on the principle of social justice. I contend that the time has come for a new progressive feminist solidarity paradigm of social justice. I outline the anti-caste and feminist movements of Indians, which are far from discussing Dalit women in the village. The anti-caste movement is based on Dalit identity and Ambedkar's ideology that fights for the rights of Dalits in India. While feminists talk about human rights and equality, none of these approaches work in a village plagued by caste-based violence. So, caste and gender issues and violence need to shed light on Dalit feminist politics around social justice.

Keywords: Caste, gender, violence, social justice, and Dalit women

Introduction:

Caste unity and social justice are and will remain fundamental concerns for Dalit women. Historically and currently, caste segregation and institutional as well as individual discrimination have been formative experiences in the socialization and political outlook of Dalit women. Therefore, Dalit women claim that their caste identity is more salient than their gender identity.

According to Rawls, are principles of justice that "provide a way of assigning rights and duties in the basic institutions of society and . . . define the appropriate distribution of the benefits and burdens of social cooperation." One can think of principles of justice as instruments of theoretical criticism and practical choice, guiding our appraisal of different social institutions, but it is essential to think of such principles also as one of the crucial operative elements in a functioning set of institutions. (Scanlon, 73)

¹Dr. Ambedkar said that caste is the origin of an undemocratic structure and it is an obstacle to the fulfillment of democracy. His idea of democracy was, of course, based on the principle of equality. According to him, "where equality is denied, everything else can be denied." Political developments are the key to all liberation. He, therefore, suggested to the deprived classes to seize political power to recognize social democracy as a real character. He enjoyed social democracy in India. Political democracy in particular cannot succeed without being based on social democracy, he noted. He was of the view that political democracy should collectively transform its form into social democracy to promote state socialism.

¹Ambedkar's writing and speeches Volumes 3 and 5 talk about Caste and democratic values.

Over the past two decades, Dalit women have rallied against caste-based violence that has shaped their lives. On the strength of shared experience, Dalit women have recognized that the political demands for social justice speak more effectively than the pleas of a few different voices. The politics of violence based on this caste have changed the way violence against Dalit women is perceived.

Accepting the politics of caste identity, however, is stressful due to caste concepts dominated by social justice. In mainstream liberal discourse, caste, gender, and other identity categories are often seen as remnants of partisanship or domination. It means an internal negative framework in which Dalit feminist forces work to exclude or neglect those who are different. According to this understanding, our political goal is feminist politics based on social transformation and restructuring the value of democracy.

The problem with caste identity politics, as some critics have alleged, is not that it fails to transcend differences, but rather that it exacerbates or ignores internal differences. In the context of caste-based violence against women, this fallacy of distinction in identity politics is problematic, as the violence experienced by many Dalit women is shaped by other dimensions of their identity, such as caste and gender. Moreover, ignoring differences between groups creates tension between groups, another problem with identity politics that underlies attempts to politicize caste-based violence against women.

Dalit feminists' attempts to politicize women's experiences and the despicable attempt to politicize Dalit women's experiences have surfaced again and again as if each detail were to be found in mutually exclusive territory. Although caste and gender easily intersect in the lives of Dalit women, they regularly engage in feminist and anti-caste practices.

My purpose in this article is to explore the social location of Dalit women by exploring the caste and gender dimensions of violence against them. Focusing on the dimensions of dominated caste men's violence against women consider how the experiences of Dalit women are a product of the frequent caste and gender caste system.

Dominated caste structure and violence:

I have divided the points in this article into two categories. In Part I, I discuss the case study of Hathras rape based on the dominant caste structure and the social status of Dalit girls in the village through a case study. I turn my attention to the politics of social justice in Part II, where I analyze how both feminist and anti-caste politics have contributed to the marginalization of the issue of violence against Dalit women. Finally, I address the implications of a social justice approach to the caste system.

I saw the dynamics of caste in the structure of the village during a brief field study of the case of oppression of Dalit women. Many women seek protection from society, but due to social pressure and caste domination, Dalit women have become vulnerable. Where systems of caste and gender, domination come together, as they do in the experiences of oppressed Dalit women, intervention strategies are needed to build support systems for them.

Hathras cases² of atrocities draw attention to how the patterns of caste subordination intersect in the caste-based experience of Dalit women. Many provisions of the Atrocities Act and Non-Discrimination Policy in India protect the interests of Dalit women and caste-based violence. Dalit women do not enjoy

²The Hathras case is not a significant cause of caste-based violence, but the case studied to the Dalit feminist politics of solidarity

equal status in Indian villages, which are already marginalized due to the male-dominated caste structure. Politicized the social justice process,

The Caste-Based Violence Atrocity Act³ raises the issue of social exclusion, and the provisions, as well as the modest efforts to respond to certain issues at the intersection of the social status of Dalit women, explain how ineffective they can be. Caste identity and gender affect the chances of Dalit women to raise their voices against caste-based violence.

Historically, the prevailing concept of caste-based violence in rural India and the use of violence to legitimize efforts to control and discipline the Dalit community has been well-established, which threatens the dominant caste as a whole. Indian feminists have attacked other dominant, essentially patriarchal, concepts of domestic violence, especially rape as represented by law. But they limit themselves to caste-based violence. Feminist Limitations of Mainstream Intervention in Caste-Based Violence. There are two reasons 1) The Dalit movement and the involvement of society in seeking justice for Dalit women. 2) No Dalit women-centered law has been enacted to intervene in incidents of violence. The Scheduled Caste / Scheduled Tribe Atrocities Act applies to the entire Dalit community with no specific provision for Dalit women. This is how the legal rules work to give legal recognition to the caste hierarchy which is the foundation of Hinduism. Therefore, it is difficult for Dalit women to prove their innocence.

Caste and gender, written in the social constructs of violence, are only contemporary expressions of narratives of rape and oppression that arise from a historical period when caste and gender were more clearly polished. Another is the devaluation of Dalit women and the neglect of their sexual oppression.

Politicizing caste-based violence:

I am discussing the case study of the Hatharas village where a Dalit girl was raped. On September 14, 2020, a girl belonging to the Dalit community in the Hathras district of Uttar Pradesh was allegedly raped by four upper-caste men. She died in a hospital in Delhi after two weeks of struggle. After her death, the victim was forcibly cremated without the consent of the family. The girl's brother claimed that no one was arrested in the first 10 days after the incident.

The alleged rape and sexual assault took place when the girl went to the farm to collect fodder for their cattle. Four men belonging to the dominant caste Thakur caste dragged the girl by her 'dupatta' around her neck which injured her spinal cord. After that, the four raped the girl. The girl was paralyzed due to a massive spinal cord injury and other serious injuries.

Dalit women are in different positions in the economic, social, and political world. I have witnessed many Indian atrocities. Special attention has been paid to the Hathras atrocity case where Dalit girls are targeted in Indian villages for caste-based violence.

³The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 (its proper name) is an Act of the Parliament of India enacted to prevent atrocities and hate crimes against the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. This law is known as the SC / ST Act, POA, Prevention of Atrocities Act, or simply the Atrocities Act. Dalits fall into the category of Scheduled Caste. The general provisions of existing laws such as the Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955, and the Indian Penal Code are inadequate to prevent gross insults and crimes against the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Recognizing these existing problems, Parliament passed the "Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989, and Rules, 1995.

Caste and politics have a huge impact on our policies and programs. Not to any political party Courage to take a stand against caste-based violence in rural areas. The reaction of various political parties shows how much they are involved in outdated concepts and how much they are adapting to the new India that is struggling to emerge. At a time when the emphasis is on cultivating caste identity in India the SC / ST Atrocities Act focuses on the atrocities of Dalits and Adivasis in India.

Hathras rape happened in BulGarhi a very small village with 66 houses comprising 504 population and 10 kilometers away from Hathras town. I keep reading news and getting updates about this incident and have been giving my reflections in several webinars about my understanding and ten-year experiences working on the issues of caste-based violence against Dalit women and girls. The ride to this village on 23rd November 2020 was full of emotions.

In Hathras village that there is a high extent of untouchability practiced the village by the dominant castes who are mainly the Thakurs, i.e., the Rajputs and Brahmins.

Narratives of the family drawn attention to the social location of the Dalit community in the village. They do not feel safe in the village and that is obvious there is a huge possibility of them moving out of the village to ensure that their lives are not at risk anymore

The pain of losing the daughter and also not being able to see her dead body hits them every minute.

⁴They also said that “How can we believe that it was our daughter who was cremated by the UP Police as we were not allowed to see the dead body”

“What happened in Hathras is a continuation of the same violence. Caste Hindus are convinced that they will enjoy all impunity. Simultaneously, just as UP (Uttar Pradesh) tops the charts for atrocities against Dalits, it also tops the charts for crimes against women. These go hand in hand. A caste-conditioned society which believes that it has the right to be violent against Dalits will unleash this violence at the first instance against women and children, and especially because they are the most vulnerable,” said Kandasamy.

It is either ignorant or baseless to accuse the voiceless politicians, media, and activists of politicizing identity. Crime and the state response were the most toxic form of identity politics that could be practiced - one where the accused is protected by the state and the victim is deprived of all the human rights that the constitution promises her regardless of caste or religion. Protest is - in anger - a call for natural justice for the victim and for the perpetrators to be punished regardless of their ethnic identity. This outcry is against the politics of identity, it is a reaction to the politics of caste-based oppression. This is why the Hathras rape case was politicized based on caste and gender which is inevitable.

⁴The next day, on September 30, the dead body of a Dalit girl was taken to Hathras village, and cremated against the wishes of her family, at the behest of the UP Police officials. The family opposed cremating her at midnight as it was the village tradition not to cremate a dead body after sunset. However, the police allegedly locked up the relatives and forced some of her immediate family members to cremate her, after which the police removed the body and cremated it.

Dalit Feminism and Solidarity Politics:

⁵In 2012, the Nirbhaya rape case came to the fore, after which there was outrage among the people of the whole country, lakhs of crores of people came out on the streets to get justice for Nirbhaya. Just a few months back, Nirbhaya finally got justice.

Even one year has not been completed since the culprits of Nirbhaya were hanged, but it has to be told with great sadness that another case like the Nirbhaya case has come to the fore in the country. The shadow of the same poor has again hovered over the daughters of the country. For your information, let us tell you that the incident that took place in the Hathras district of Uttar Pradesh has taken everyone by surprise, 8 years ago today, we got to see such a heinous crime in Delhi. After coming to the fore of this matter, once again people have come to the memory of the Nirbhaya case.

The main principle of justice in capitalist democracies can be stated as the right to equal freedom or liberties in a political and economic system based on individual freedom of contract, whether this is in the economy, the family, or the social contract of government. John Rawls (1971) frames this as his first principle of Justice as Fairness, and Robert Nozick (1974) characterizes this as justice based on historically acquired entitlements that defend individual freedom. Milton Friedman (1962)

Social Justice implies that all benefits and privileges in society should be shared by all its members. If any group in society has suffered from structural inequalities inherent in the social system special care should be taken to remove such structural inequalities. The obvious implication is that the state should take affirmative action to remove such injustices perpetrated in the same society by one section over another section (Tiwari, 2009)

Thus, while Rawls' theory bases principles of justice on a hypothetical choice made by persons who may appear to be standing temporarily outside any particular society, the point of view that the theory takes as fundamental is that of a person in society. (Scanlon,73)

Political philosophy is the study of human ideas and thoughts which underlie political systems and institutions. Its main concern is with nothing less than the 'moral phenomena of human behavior in society. But political philosophy gives the political institutions such as the State, Government, etc., the human base and purpose of togetherness for social development. It also suggests the means to coordinate human ends of different social groups within the State

(Rajasekhariah and Jayaraj , 91)

Historically, legal rules, for example, have ruled that rape victims must resist their attackers in order to have their claims accepted. A Dalit woman should report to the police station to reduce caste violence in any conflict. Although the SC and ST Atrocities Act no longer needs formal opposition, the Dalit movement needs resistance and protection to raise its voice for social justice against the systematic neglect of Dalit women's justice and a narrow view of oppression. A history of sexual violence and rape against Dalit women is frequent. Dalit women face subordination based on both caste and gender, reforms in the Atrocities Act and Rape Act and judicial processes based on narrow concepts of caste subjugation fail to address the marginalization of Dalit women.

⁵<https://hindi.dekhnews.com/headlines/manisha-valmiki-rape-murder-news-in-hindi-hathras-rape-case/>

Due to this limited understanding of caste and rape, sexual politics continues. Use of anti-caste movement to gain support for Dalit women. Thus, Dalit women are pre-packaged prostitutes as bad women in the cultural narrative about bad women who have no prestige and respect in society. The stigma attached to the claims of Dalit women is the result of a complex intersection of caste sex systems, which creates appropriate rules for low-value women, and a caste code that provides an image that defines the supposedly essential nature of Dalit women. If these sexual images have become part of the cultural image of Dalit women, then the representation of the Dalit female body suggests at least some stories that can be honored after rape and death.

To understand the concept of caste-based violence, it is necessary to look beyond the social structures and processes of the dominant society that insidiously cover caste, gender, and democratic movements. Caste and gender are other features in the context of Dalit feminist thought. A major obstacle in these battles is the "caste" approach to most non-democratic values. In Caste Theory, Ambedkar's ideology is described as the political claim that "a certain dominant caste induces all important oppression.

"The Caste system", according to Dr. Ambedkar, "prevents common activity and by preventing common activity it has prevented the Hindus from becoming a society with a unified life and a consciousness of its being." Unity and cohesion in such a society for building up an overarching just political society in such a context was, of course, unthinkable. He conceives of a society that is a spiritual whole that does not ignore the essential parts, however small they may be. If they are ignored and ill-treated it will impair the harmony and unity in society. **(Rajasekhariah and Jayaraj, 91)**

The historical experience of Dalit women has taken over the hegemonic concepts of caste and rape to such an extent that the experiences of Dalit women have little space left.

Dalit politics must have become more "sexual" since 1972. When the Dalit Panther ⁶raises its voice, the Dalits are oppressed. But in the anti-caste and Dalit movements in India, Dalit women who have survived violence are not given justice. According to Dalit women, Dalit men are organized but space is limited for Dalit women. The issue of Dalit women is not considered an issue of gender and caste. All the efforts and protests did not penetrate the voice of Dalit women. Dalit movements think that all atrocities are considered Dalit politics, not Dalit feminist politics.

The following dominant caste behaviors and narratives suggest this. The bodies of Dalit women are available for sexual exploitation and this is a matter of pride for the dominant caste people in the village.

That is why the bodies of Dalit women can be made a simple place of violence: no danger, no price to be paid, and the perpetrator is assured of punishment, socio-political protection, and socio-political protection he gets from the ruling caste. It used to be a vague bias a tendency to be biased — but now it is completely shameless and is being demanded as a right. We have also seen the National Savarna Parishad coming out in support of the rapists - the 'sons' of the society who can never do anything wrong. There will be children. And Thakur's (dominated caste people) children will be Thakur's children.

⁶The Dalit Panther Movement was formed in 1972 when Dalit youth came forward and undertook the task of bringing all Dalits on one platform and mobilizing them for their struggle for civil rights and justice. It showed that the lower castes were unwilling to accept humiliation and their poor condition without protest.

Ambedkar wanted to restructure society based on equality and rationality, so he opposed caste based on the social structure he thought of, which included class inequality. According to Ambedkar, Hindu society was made up of four classes⁷ namely Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras. These classes became a closed unit called caste and they brought unequal distribution of benefits and privileges. He was adamant that the caste system must be abolished if a society based on equality and brotherhood was to be built, so he decided to fight against such discrimination and fight for it.

According to Kimberle the embrace of identity politics, however, is in tension with dominant conceptions of social justice (Crenshaw 91). In the context of caste-based violence against women, this elimination of difference in identity politics is problematic, fundamentally because the violence many women experiences are often gendered. But other dimensions of their identity, which are based on caste, are considered the politics of justice.

Caste is a dominant political spectrum for Dalit women, Dalit women refute the popular view that gender is irrelevant to caste women. The main theoretical essence of the Hathras case is that the patterns that characterize the political attitudes and behavior of Dalit women and groups from more than one social class are extremely complex. On non-gender policy issues and problems, caste unity promotes a democratic approach. Nevertheless, complex issues and incidents such as gender versus gender and caste are politically relevant for Dalit women. Therefore, in this case, there is a need to work against collective pressure for the benefit of Dalit women rather than the Dalit community.

Conclusion and Discussion:

Dalit women have long survived caste and gender oppression. Dalit women, gendered women, and economically disadvantaged in the dominant caste society. Despite caste and gender oppression, they are resisting different forms of oppression and struggling for their political identity. However, being a democratic society, they feel helpless and powerless over another privilege. Hathras is not a significant case to discuss the history of caste-based violence of social justice and democratic values. But out of this history of caste-based violence emerged solidarity politics.

Different examples of social justice prioritize democratic values and therefore those who use them may often disagree on whether a given policy or situation is just. Or unjust. Dalit feminist social justice is currently being used by the anti-caste movement in India. It emphasizes the democratic concept of social justice, which prioritizes individual freedom; The concept of welfare liberalism, or social democracy, which prioritizes equality among citizens and, by extension of certain Dalit feminist theories, among humans; And the concept of solidarity and social justice, a socialist principle that prioritizes the collective voice of Dalit women.

One of the meanings of the social justice solidarity paradigm is that those who work in that field need to make social changes in their own identities so that they realize what their common interests are. I have argued that most Dalit women have access to mainstream feminist solidarity networks in their local areas that have international implications, which help Dalit women create a place in mainstream society.

Social justice solidarity supports victims through various systems of dominance in society who come together to challenge these injustices. This has led to concrete and specific ways of relating to others that

are not considered abstract. Dalit feminist solidarity is not only for gender unity but also for caste and democratic values which lead specifically to the Constitution of India.

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