Chapter 1: Introduction

Before going into the discussion on caste violence, in this chapter, I would present a brief history of dalit movement to provide an understanding of the present social and political position of dalits. I also discuss the theoretical works on racial violence, communal violence and gender violence in order to locate the significance of my work on caste violence.

Dalits from times immemorial have been considered as untouchables in India traditionally categorized as outcastes, falling outside the hierarchical ladder of the four-varna caste system. They are categorized in the Constitution adopted in 1950 as Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. They have been socially subjugated, politically marginalized, economically exploited and deprived of basic human dignity. Majority of the dalit population lives in segregated hamlets called Veliwada or Dalitwada located at the outskirts of villages or in urban slums. Most of the dalits have no access to formal education and have been living below the poverty line. According to the traditional caste structure, untouchables are not supposed to become literate and educated whereas Brahmins have monopoly over the field of education, Sanskrit, Vedas, priesthood and temple related management. The caste based division of labour has confined them to professions such as scavenging, toilet cleaning, removing the night soil, leather work, agricultural labour and so on. A large number of men, women and children of these communities in the villages are landless labourers and poor peasants.
Alongside various kinds of exploitation, dalits have to conform themselves to an inferior position of subordination and deference in all their interactions with the upper-castes at the work place in the field or anywhere else. Dalit women in villages face sexual harassment and exploitation at the work place, sometimes in the name of religion.

Though dalits have been economically exploited for centuries, economic well-being alone cannot solve the caste question since it is associated with the question of purity/pollution according to the traditional caste ideology. The labour of dalits has been exploited in the name of caste based division of labour which still prevails in many parts. But the existence of untouchability is the most significant feature of caste system that subjugates dalits. To discuss caste violence, it is important to look at various phases of history which dalits have passed through and their struggle for political power, social equality and equal opportunity. Dalits have been experiencing various forms of caste violence such as physical and symbolic violence. Outburst of upper-caste rage that turns into atrocities such as massacres, burning dalits alive, rape or molestation of dalit women can be considered as physical caste violence. The inferior position of dalits according to the norms of caste system, humiliation that dalits face and discrimination of dalits on the basis of caste in education, the concepts of upper-caste notion of “merit”, language, hegemonic cultural values that make dalits inferior in the society, are various forms of symbolic violence against dalits. However such forms of violence are not considered as violence since it is difficult to address them in various contexts. Dalits are also fighting against such violence through political awareness, education and mass movements against caste system. For the present discussion on caste violence it is important to briefly
look at how the dalit movement in various phases contributed to upward mobility of
dalits socially, economically and politically.

Here, it must be pointed out that the history of the dalit movement and dalit politics can
be traced out only in terms of various phases by the movement itself in alternative,
marginalized history writing. Dalit struggle and dalit movements, experiences have been
documented not by the mainstream history but only in a few scholarly and literary works
by dalits and non-dalits which I have called alternative history or alternative sources to
construct the history of dalit movement. This alternative history looks at particularly the
mass movement in which dalits have fought against caste discrimination and subjugation.
Even this history of dalit movement has its shortcomings. One of the visible
shortcomings is that the history of dalit movement has missed out on issues related to
gender and dalit women.\(^4\)

**Colonial India and Dalits**

Colonial India provided dalits with new opportunities such as entry into education, jobs
in the army and so on. At the same time, colonial rule fortified the power of upper castes
over Indian society and they exploited dalits at many levels. It created some new
landowning communities in India through Zamindari, and Ryotwari systems.\(^5\) Though the
imperial administration implemented the rule of non-interference towards certain
religious and cultural practices in India, they also had introduced English education
which made few educated Indians to understand new ideas and ideologies like liberty,
equality and fraternity.\(^6\) Dalits were hired in colonial army, in factories and mills run by
the British. Following the pressure from reformers like Jyothiba Phule, as well as by
Christian missionaries, the British government declared the government schools in Bombay open to all castes including the untouchables. Dalits in this phase entered the field of education which has proved to be the most significant step in the history of dalit assertion.

During the first half of the nineteenth century some significant developments took place in the educational history of Madras presidency. Thomas Munro (1820-27) the governor of Madras presidency ordered for a survey on schools to find out the complete list of schools in each district of Madras Presidency showing the number of schools and teachers, the castes to which they belonged, books and materials they used and the sources of funding for these institutions along with the estimation of the total population of the region. The result of the survey shows that the number of Malas and Madigas and Parayas in the school is negligible. Schools in the traditional way are associated with agraharas.

The work of missionaries helped a few dalits enter education, though most of them have found clerical and other small jobs in the missionary institutes. Still dalits were largely engaged in their occupations entailing manual labour. Apart from the missionaries' efforts until the early 1930s the colonial government made no serious efforts to promote dalit education. The colonial policy drawn up by the education commission of 1882 had recommended that all schools maintained by the government and aided schools should be kept open to all castes. But the colonial government did not undertake any effort to implement the recommendation for nearly fifty years. However, Mahatma Jyothiba
Phule (1826-90) under the impact of western education started separate schools for dalit children as early as 1851 in the Marathi speaking area of Bombay presidency.

**Phule and Self-respect Movement**

Between 1810 and 1900, a period in which radical ideas of human equality and liberty from the French revolution were circulating worldwide, the anti-Brahmin movement in India became the basis for wide ranging efforts at social change. The social movement against the entrenched caste system under the leadership of Jyothiba Phule (1826-1890) in Maharastra began to question the upper-caste dominance. Phule was the founder of anti-caste movement in India. He was inspired by the American philosophers of liberty and equality (especially Thomas Paine) as well as the French revolution, and worked to persuade the British administration to implement progressive anti-Brahminical social reforms. The movement largely helped to unify the lower castes against the Brahmin dominance. He and his wife Savitribai Phule set up schools for dalit girls. Phule called on non-Brahmins to reject the priesthood of Brahmins in solemnizing marriages. Brahmins went to court during this period against the revolutionary step taken by the self-respecting dalit toilers under Phule’s leadership. He helped Brahmin widows who were exploited by men in their conjugal homes. He further started a home to help them bring up their fatherless children.

Phule’s writings like *Gulamgiri* (slavery) (1873), *Brahmananche Kasab* (1869), *Sarvajanik Satya Dharma Pustak* (1891), *Shatkaryacha Asood* (Cultivator’s Whipcord) (1883), and *Akhandadi Kavya Rachana* (1891) vehemently and rigorously questioned
Brahmanism and caste system. Phule was equally wary of the British colonial government and its policies. He believed that though the colonial government appeared to show concern for the status of the dalits, their policies favoured Brahmins and upper castes and added to their dominance. He reinterpreted mythologies which have supported and justified the Brahmin dominance over society. Such dominance is not just social and economic but also psychological that he says that the people are suffering the slavery to the Brahmanism.

During this period, the base of anti-caste ideology helped dalits to understand that caste has been the vicious circle that subjugated them and caste system made them subservient to the upper castes and landlords. In this phase, the educated dalits also converted to other religions significantly to Christianity. This substantiates political assertion of dalits and their understanding of how Hinduism provides basis for the caste system.

**Arya Samaj and Dalits**

In the first half of the 20th century, Brahma Samaj and Arya Samaj opened up new opportunities though they were very limited and not many dalits could find solution for caste question in Samaj. Arya Samaj (1875), and Brahma Samaj (1828), were founded by Swamy Dayananda Saraswati and Raja Ram Mohan Roy respectively with the influence of western liberal ideologies and religion.

The Arya Samaj considered caste as undemocratic but it focused on issues of upper castes such as sati and child marriages (being perceived to be prevalent only in upper castes). In the first half of the 20th century, Samaj started training centers (Sevashrams)
for dalits. Guduru Ramachandra Rao started one such centre in Gudiwada, Krishna district in 1912. Bhagya Reddy Varma and Kusuma Dharmanna are a few significant dalit ideologues among the members of that centre. Later, they have left the Arya Samaj since caste and caste inequalities had entered Samaj politics as well. The Samaj was dominated by upper castes and they also fund that it could not solve the caste question for various reasons. In spite of certain reformations followed by the Samaj such as women’s education and dalit education, it failed to remove the caste system. One of the reasons for the failure was caste was not theorized and considered as the indivisible part of Hindu religion. Continuing with the Hindu religion is itself nothing but the continuation of caste system as caste system is part and parcel of the Hindu religion. The Samaj’s ideals are to introduce few reforms in Hinduism rather than fighting against religion. Arya Samaj and Brahma Samaj reformed Hindu religion to rid themselves of evil customs like sati, child marriages and untouchability. Even at the doctrinal and ideological level, Arya Samaj could not establish complete anti-caste ideology. Arya Samaj has certain rituals such as Shuddhi\(^{10}\) (purification) which would make untouchables and lower castes eligible for access to Vedas. This shows that the Arya Samaj is only finding remedies and temporary relief from untouchability for dalits rather than vehemently challenging it. Thus, it does not fit into the anti-caste ideology dalits were adapting to. Dalit assertion in later stages became more political and anti-religious and anti-caste adopting even ideal of complete rejection of Hinduism. The Adi-Hindu movement and Ambedkarite movement worked with the ideals of rejection of Hinduism.
Adi Hindu and Adijan Movement

Between 1900 and 1930s, British India witnessed major dalit movements in Maharastra, Andhra and Karnatakka areas. Significantly, the fact that dalits were participants and even leaders of the broader anti-caste movement has been rendered invisible in the mainstream histories of India. In pre-independence India, there were anti-caste movements in Maharastra and Tamil Nadu regions as well as specifically dalit movements in Maharastra, Punjab (Adi-Hindu movement), Uttar Pradesh (Adi- Hindu movement), Kerala (Narayana Guru’s movement), Tamilnadu (Adi Dravidas) and Andhra Pradesh (Adi-Andhra). In addition, non-Brahmin and unorganized dalit assertions in Mysore and Bihar questioned Brahmin dominance.11

In Andhra Pradesh, in the 1930s, the first generation of educated dalits announced themselves to be non-Aryans. Manguram in Punjab, Achyutanand in United Provinces, Bhagya Reddy Varma in Hyderabad state and Kishan Bhansode in Maharastra began self-respect movements and they spread the anti-Brahmin ideology across the country.12

These predecessors of Ambedkar re-examined the Vedas and Puranas from dalit point of view. They declared that the Dravidians of the Indus valley civilization had been called Naagas, Dasus and Dasyus.12 They led a major movement for social and cultural change throughout India. In Andhra Pradesh, Bhagya Reddy Varma can be called the head of the movement. He declared that dalits are non-Aryans and they are the sons of the soil.13
Different movements around the country originated from this philosophy drawn from Adi-Andhra movement, Adi-Karnataka movement and so on. This self-respect movement emerged throughout the country. In A.P, Adi-Hindu movement was run by people like Rajamani Devi, Arige Ramaswamy, A.L Adayya, Subbaiah, Venkat Rao, along with Bhagya Reddy Varma and they organized various conferences between 1912 and 1924 in different places of Andhra region. These organizations of Adi-Hindu movement maintained a distinct ideology and polemics to fight caste-Hindu dominance. They also attempted social reformation such as prohibiting eating meat and drinking alcohol in social functions and abolition of devadasi system. Adi-Hindu identity which was pervasive among the Chamars of north India is nothing but the proclaiming that the ‘oppressed classes’ are the descendents of the original or aboriginal people of India. They were the aboriginal people who ruled India before the advent of Aryans. This ideology of strong rejection of traditional ideas and values of caste and religion became a strong point in dalit politics. Adi-Hindu movement also stood against the temple entry movement and encouraged complete rejection of Hindu traditions and rituals. Samaj politics were trying to find solution for caste question with the hold of Hinduism where as Adi-Hindu movement run by the dalit ideologues have proposed complete rejection of Hindu religion. Adi-Hindu movement emphasizes on self-respect of dalits.

The caste Hindus sought to convince the British that the untouchables constituted the fifth (Panchama) Varna of Hinduism. But against such claims these movements asserted that they were the Adi (first, native, indigenous, aboriginal) people and they refused to be incorporated humiliatingly as the fifth Varna by the invaders. In this movement, some untouchables also attempted to enter temples libraries, and other public places where
entry had been denied by Hindu religion. This movement also rejected the visible markers of inferior position of dalits such as dress code. For example, dalits are not supposed to wear footwear, dalit men should tie their upper cloth around their waist when they see upper-castes, dalits are not supposed to wear gold and they should not carry an umbrella and so on. Deflecting such symbols and not confining to symbolic status of being inferior is a part of revolt of dalits against caste system.

**Influence of Gandhian Philosophy on Dalit Politics**

In 1930, Mahatma Gandhi began to refer to dalits as *Harijans* (an identity which dalits denied to accept later) which puzzled many dalits and dalit leaders. It has been criticized in many ways by dalits. The question of untouchables had been included in Gandhian nationalist politics due to the constant attempts made by Ambedkar. Gandhi’s understanding of dalit questions proves his lack of ontological approach since he himself is a non-dalit. According to him, untouchability arises from the question of purity (hygiene) and if the dalits give up the evils (or unhygienic habits) like consumption of liquor and eating cow meat, they can be treated equally as caste Hindus. Gandhi’s ideology on traditional caste system is somewhat nostalgic and in a way he celebrates caste as a system that keeps the order in the society. According to him, the provision of the caste system is commendable due to its division of labour and professional skills of the various caste groups. Gandhi said, “To destroy the caste system and adopt the western European social system means that Hindus must give up the principle hereditary occupation, which is soul of the caste system. The hereditary principle is an eternal principle. To change is to create disorder.”
According to Gandhi, caste is a natural system that protects the order in the society and if it is dismantled, there would be chaos or havoc in the society. But the same order generates violence against untouchables by permanently confining them to the menial jobs like scavenging and leather work.\textsuperscript{20}. He believes that the professions such as scavenging should not be considered inferior. But even if the respect given to that profession, it would not any way help dalits to step out of it or to escape such confinement.

When Ambedkar gave representation for dalits that they should be provided with separate electorates, Gandhi, the then leader of the Indian National Congress opposed the proposal. Gandhi claimed that the provision of separate electorates for dalits would split the Hindu community and thus weaken the nation. For Ambedkar, Gandhi and Indian National Congress had betrayed the cause of dalits who constitute a huge section of the Hindu population.\textsuperscript{21}

Gandhi never agreed that Hinduism is the origin of untouchability rather he says he wants to ignore the fact for his own spiritual thirst which shows that he stands for the Hindu religion rather for the millions of “his brethren” who constitute a huge section of Hindu populace.\textsuperscript{9} While Ambedkar suggested intermarriage and inter-dining as important factors for the elimination of caste in “Annihilation of Caste”\textsuperscript{22}, Gandhi disagrees saying that inter-dining and intermarriage are issues of personal concern. (72)
Gandhi considered sanitation work as the work that is done by mother figure in the family. One can pose a question why only dalits have to perform the role of a mother? Why not the Brahmins and other upper-castes? He said in his famous prayer, “that if I have to be reborn, I should be born an ‘untouchable’, so that I may share their sorrows, sufferings, and the affronts leveled at them, in order that I may endeavour to free myself and them from that miserable condition.”(3) It suggests that it is important to have an experiential knowledge of dalit community to understand the question of untouchability and how it has prevailed in both in ancient and contemporary sense in the modern world.

Era of the Ambedkarite Movement to Contemporary Dalit Movement

Though a few dalits had already become educated, well aware of caste discrimination and had participated in dalit self respect movements, the number of dalits who had experienced upward mobility was abysmally low by the time the period of Ambedkarite movement begins. A huge number of dalits still had no access to the basic needs of life and were living in subhuman status. Under the leadership of Ambedkar dalits mobilized a mass movement. Ambedkar (14 April 1891 – 6 December 1956) became the leader of dalits. Ambedkarite movement constitutes the most crucial period in dalit politics and history. During this period, Ambedkar was actively involved in fighting for justice for dalits. Ambedkar has theorized caste system and proposed various solutions for the eradication of caste as well.

In 1924, Ambedkar started the organization Bahiskrit Hitakarini Sabha, for the upliftment of the untouchables. Ambedkar adopted strategies including eradication of illiteracy and economic upliftment of the downtrodden; bringing political consciousness
among dalits and their representation in public life; and non-violent struggle against visible symbols of caste, like denial of Hinduism, seeking entry into temples and access to water from wells and tanks.

Ambedkar, following up on a significant victory, when the High Court of Bombay gave a verdict in favour of the untouchables, organized a successful non-violent march and entered into a temple. The struggle shook the religious foundation on which caste system is built. For Ambedkar, temple entry is not an acceptance of the Hindu religion by dalits but an opportunity to refute the normative strands and ideals of Hinduism and its followers. Dalits entering temple itself subverts the Hindu concept of ritual purity.

To enhance the political representation of dalits, Ambedkar formed a political party 'Scheduled Castes Federation' in April 1942. In 1948, he presented Hindu Code Bill before the Legislative Committee after he reformulated it. His Hindu Code Bill advocated right to divorce for women, legal acceptance to inter-caste marriages and women's right to property. It also proposed to set equal code of behaviour for both men and women in the marriage system. He struggled for women's liberation from the caste-entrenched patriarchal system. At the conference of the Depressed Classes and Women held at Nagpur in 1942, he stated: 'Let every girl who marries stand by her husband, claim to be her husband's friend and equal, and refuse to be his slave'. Ambedkar also recognized patriarchy as another evil of our society apart from untouchability. Being the prime architect of Indian Constitution, he advocated various provisions in favour of dalits and lower castes.
Ambedkarite movement is also known for religious conversion. Ambedkar also advised the religious conversion for dalits as one of the means by which dalits can step out of the caste system. In October 1956, he, along with about two million dalit men and women, converted to Buddhism in Nagpur. For Ambedkar, Buddha was one of those inspiring personalities in the history who raised his voice against social inequalities. The act of conversion of Ambedkar has political connotations rather than religious. Many dalits during this period converted to Buddhism.

From 1920's onwards, in Maharashtra under the leadership of Ambedkar, and in Tamil Nadu, under the leadership of Periyar, anti-caste assertion gained strength and vitality. On some occasions as in the famous Puna pact, Ambedkar was forced to compromise with Gandhi. In spite of this we can say that Ambedkar's appointment as law minister in the first cabinet of independent India, and the constitutional guarantees for protection of SCs and STs that were written in the constitution drafted under his leadership are a measure of his success as a leader of dalits. Most of the dalit movements in different parts of the country, at local and regional levels emerged during his time.

The contemporary dalit movement and dalit literature first emerged in the new context in Maharashtra among the followers of Ambedkar. For Ambedkar two principles within Hinduism are responsible for inequality in the society of India. One is that caste status of individuals depends on birth and the other is the concept of purity and pollution. His movement aimed at the creation of a homogenous society in India by abolishing these two principles. Ambedkar fought for the rights of those who have been marginalized and
crushed under the wheels of Hinduism such as untouchables and lower castes. He dedicated all his life to fight for justice for the downtrodden.

During this period Ambedkar suggested the term “dalit” instead of untouchables and against Gandhi’s term harijan to suit the political status of untouchables. This term refers to the oppression experienced by the communities which have been subjugated for centuries and is equally subversive to refute the traditional caste position. Dalit ideologues have been critical of the term harijan as suggested by Gandhi on various counts.

Gopal Guru says in his “Politics Of Naming”,

“The category of harijan cannot be encapsulated within the dalit category since it is entirely ‘metaphysical’. It imputes an element of ‘resigned fate’ to the subject and therefore can render it inactive. Second, the term harijan is an ascribed one since it does not flow from the untouchables own experiences. It was artificially imposed on the untouchables by Gandhi and those upper caste people who could not genuinely integrate them within their social consciousness despite its divine association. Overall the category of harijan lacks a discursive capacity.”

In contrast, the category dalit is not a metaphysical construction. It derives its epistemic and political strength from the material social experience of the community. It is this social construction of dalithood which makes it authentic and dynamic rather than passive and rigid. Hence, the term dalit, in Gail Omvedt’s opinion provides a militant alternative to the Gandhian term harijan.
Finally the category harijan, given its divine association, is inadequate for capturing the specific realities since it also replaces the need for internal critique."

Ambedkarite movement is also known for dalit women’s participation in the movement. Dalit women’s political assertion and their political agenda came into discussion during this period. Moon and Pawar pointed out that dalit women who participated in Ambedkarite movement not only worked as part of the movement but also proposed their concerns related to the dalit women’s emancipation.

“The political movement begun by Dr. Ambedkar brought forth the political ambition of untouchable women. The women conducted conferences and passed resolutions to support the Independent Labour Party and later the Scheduled Castes Federation programs. In describing the 1942 conference of women at Nagpur, held at the same time as the meeting of the Scheduled Castes Federation, Dr. Ambedkar said, “The presence of women in the conference in their thousands was a sight for the gods to witness. Their dress, their cleanliness and the confidence with which they behaved in the conference brought delight to my heart.” Similar conferences of women of great magnitude were organized at Kanpur (1944), Bombay (1945), and Calcutta (1946).” (51-52)

The research shows that the women, who participated in the dalit movement, were interested in reforming the marriage system such as reducing the expenses like dakshina given to the priests. Even the marriages among different untouchable sub-castes were welcomed to strengthen the dalit movement.(52)
Dalit Movement influenced people at individual and collective levels that it helped the individual understanding of caste and as well as engendered the collective struggle in the name of various groups. Dalit movement, Gandhian nationalist movement and Marxist movements helped the emergence of various dalit political groups and consciousness about the caste.

**Dalit Movement in the Context of Atrocities on Dalits in '90s**

Dalits in the contemporary society faced various outbursts of caste violence in the context of modernity, upward mobility and the emerging dalit movement which essentially bring awareness on caste system and thus fortify them to fight caste oppression.

Apart from the ritual purity that considers dalits as untouchables in areas such as temples, common water tanks and wells, untouchability has also invaded modern spaces such as hotels, tea shops and libraries. However dalit consciousness has given rise to some changes with well-marked differences in dalit communities. The commencement of dalit assertion and constant criticism against the evil practice of untouchability and inequality has resulted into violence against dalit communities by upper-castes. In 1967, in Keelavenmani village in Tanjavur District of Tamilnadu, forty-four dalits were locked inside their huts and were burnt alive when they asked for a raise in wages. In 1978, in Villupuram, thirteen Dalits were killed when they rose up against their oppressors. There are several more such examples of atrocities on dalits committed by upper/middle castes in the contemporary society.
In Andhra Pradesh, in a village Chunduru, nine members of the dalit community were chased to a field by the police where armed upper-caste Reddy men were waiting to kill them. Thirteen dalits were massacred by them in the fields. This incident has been the result of the rise of dalit consciousness with the emergence of educated dalit youth in the villages. The main reason behind these atrocities is the fact that dalits have now decided to not accept the existing norms of the society, which are oppressive to them. Caste violence also in turn makes dalits more aware of the caste oppression and caste system. The immediate context for the atrocity is a young dalit graduate Ravi went to watch cinema and sat in the balcony of cinema hall. Accidentally his feet touched the upper-caste man which offended the Reddy men. Not only the incident, but the general condition of dalits (who became less dependent on Reddys due to their education and jobs in the government sector threatened the upper-caste power) offended the Reddy men. Reddy men physically abused the dalit boy and compelled the police to register the case of eve teasing on Ravi. The rest of the dalits in the village stood by the side of Ravi and his family which further threatened the power of upper-castes over dalits. With the help of police who chased the dalits into the field, Reddys waiting with the weapons in the fields, brutally massacred thirteen dalits. Chunduru incident became a milestone in the history of dalit movement. under the leadership of Katti Padmarao, dalit led a mass movement against the injustice and fought for a special court which announced its verdict of punishment to the accused Reddy men under SC/ST (Prevention of) Atrocities Act. The case being registered and judged under SC/ST (Prevention of) Atrocities Act itself is a success of dalits because the caste angle of atrocity has been brought out. This brought more awareness among dalits against caste oppression all over the nation.
The concept of violence previously appeared more in the print/visual media and in the reports of NGOs or progressive organizations. Most of them were used to look at the facts of the crimes and atrocities occurred in various places in the name of caste. Most of the incidents of caste violence go unrecognized due to the caste biased media or even if it is reported, caste violence has not been a significant issue in the academics and literature unlike other categories of violence such as racial, gender and communal violence.

**Racial Violence**

Racial violence in western context related to genocide studies and discrimination of blacks, partition related and communal violence set platform for the discussions and theorization of violence in humanities and social sciences by various scholars. Domestic and gender related violence also became a significant area for the feminist politics to which the theorization of patriarchal structures is the core. With emergence of caste studies and dalit writing into the academics, caste discrimination and caste system became the part of scholarship in the academics.

The early theories on violence are mostly concerned with the violence of the French revolution and the holocaust in Germany; the former was a general uprising of the poor against the ruling aristocracy which introduced the concepts of liberty, equality and fraternity but was criticized for the violent ways of the revolution whereas the latter involved the genocide of Jews under Hitler, which is seen as being both communal and racial violence. In addition to it, there are a number of theories on racial violence in the
context of Blacks in America, colonization of Africa and so on. While such theories and writings may not be directly related to my major interest in this project which is to theorize violence at the intersection of caste and gender, they are helpful to develop a theoretical framework to address such violence.

**Symbolic Racial Violence and Racial Discrimination**

Frantz Fanon is a leading twentieth century theorist of revolution, colonialism, racial violence. Frantz Fanon’s writings *Wretched of the Earth* and *Black Skin White Masks* which provide us with an understanding of symbolic violence in the context of African struggle for “decolonization” which provides understanding to address the non-physical forms of violence in the categories of gender and caste.

Though the German holocaust is considered as “the” example of racial violence, I would begin by looking at racial violence from the perspective of racial discrimination against blacks, one of the reasons being that caste as a category is important to my project and thus I would want to bring out the connections and the contrast between racial discrimination and caste based discrimination.

Race and racial discrimination has been questioned strongly in various contexts such as the Negritude movement (1930s) and with the rise of African and African-American literature in the postcolonial era, Martin Luther King’s (1950s) struggle against slavery and racial discrimination and the UN World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance (WCAR) held in Durban (held first
in 1978, then in 1983 and also in 2001). The conferences had drawn inspiration from the struggle of the people of South Africa against the institutionalized system of apartheid. It built awareness among oppressed people about equality, justice and respect for human rights all around the world.

Apart from the struggle, movements and literature by Africans that eliminates the degree of violence that exists in the master-slave relationship, a significant number of theoreticians and critics like Fanon theorized racial violence in the context of the destruction of native cultures and colonial influences on culture in postcolonial context.

The question of violence is one of the significant issues dealt in Fanon's two major works *Wretched of the Earth* and *Black Skin, White Masks*. According to Fanon, violence is the only remedy for the colonization and inheritance of inferiority and submission of the colonized. Decolonization would occur only through violent means. The reason is the colonization occurred through violence and notably the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized is also established through violence. The oppressed regain the human dignity through the traumatic process and thus Fanon calls violence as the "cleansing force". Fanon's ideas on violence are drawn from the armed struggle of Algerian war while concentrating on racism and colonialism.

"In the same way, the slave here is in no way identifiable with the slave who loses himself in the object and finds in his work the source of his liberation.

The Negro wants to be like the master.

Therefore he is less independent than the Hegelian slave."
In Hegel the slave turns away from the master and turns toward the object.

Here the slave turns toward the master and abandons the object.”(220-221)

In describing the difference between the Hegelian slave and the black slave, Fanon shows how successfully with an everlasting effect the white French world has imprinted the superiority of the whiteness on the consciousness of the black populace. Since the white is the master with the “progressive” free will, the slave would not identify himself with the other slaves but with the master. Master is the “superior” and liberating figure according to the slave. This sense of inferiority, Fanon says would continue to exist in the minds of black that forces him to struggle to become white but it would lead him to uphold the essence of blackhood.

Fanon considers the racial inferiority that blacks experience as a constant violence on the minds of the black. It is the interaction that brings the question of inferiority and superiority to the fore. Inferiority is juxtaposed to superiority. Unless there is a superior there is no inferior. “I believe that the fact of the juxtaposition of the white and black races has created a massive psychoexistential complex.”(14) In a society, where the white and black races are juxtaposed, blacks who are inferior due to their skin colour have to strive to prove themselves equal to the white race. This colour is just a factor that brings the identity but the socio-cultural norms such as ‘naturally’ blacks are inferior in intellect and merit makes them to prove themselves equal to whites. “However painful it may be for me to accept this conclusion, I am obliged to state it: for the black man there is only one destiny. And it is white.”(12) Every interaction multiplies this inferiority complex
created in blacks. Language is one of the important media through which the communication takes place. The native language of blacks is considered as inferior so the usage of the white's language is considered respectable. This difficulty and pain in acquiring the other language is overlooked but the difficulty itself is violence perpetrated on them. Fanon argues that it is colonization that made it possible that the white world is culturally superior and the inferiority is established in the black world.

Fanon refers to two kinds of violence: the first kind is violence of revolt or reversal with which the oppressed challenge the domination of the colonizer. Second is the world-shattering violence of decolonization for he believes that the process of decolonization destroys both the colonizer and the colonized.

By initiating the violent struggle against the colonizer, the colonized opens up the space for decolonization. But this violence of decolonization is not the same as the violence that threatens bodies or properties which is the violence of reversal that is generated through the material manifestations. The absolute violence of the decolonization can only be "symbolic violence" that threatens the symbolic order of the society.28

In The Wretched of the Earth (1961) Fanon located the origins of Algerian violence in the mechanics of colonial society and in the psychological formation of the revolutionary subject. Through a series of case studies, he argued that it was the colonialist's aggression that bred concomitant behavior in the individual. Fanon also saw violent action as a necessary step in the development of revolutionary consciousness: it was an
appropriation of the violence of the settler, turned toward the end of liberation and the creation of new revolutionary subjects. A mind and a society shattered by violence could find salvation only in an equal and opposite violence, one directed at the cleansing liberation of a colonial society. Irene L. Gendzier writes that though Fanon seemed to have defended violence in the context of racism and colonization, "he did not write about the reconstruction of society in terms of permanent class antagonisms which would be perpetuated by violent means."29

Communal Violence in India

Coming to the Indian context, the category of communal or caste violence or gender violence are overlapping and interlinked. It is not possible to look at gender violence without taking the religious and caste structures into consideration. Hence, I will look at communal and caste violence with an understanding of gender violence.

The violence that accompanied partition (1946-48) and the many incidents of violence between different religious groups that have occurred since then can be categorized as communal violence. Violent events preceded and followed the partition of India into two countries on the basis of religion left a deep scar on the minds of the people. Later, recollections of those events began to appear in media, debates and discussions. Scholars on gender/communal violence like Veena Das discussed communal violence to understand the gender dimension and patriarchy.30 The theorization of partition related violence as past and associated with memories of people in India began in 1980s.31 Scholars such as Veena Das reexamined partition related violence from gender
perspective because the partition violence has an imperative angle of gender. Women were victims of rape, abduction, mutilation and violence during the India Pakistan partition period (1946-48). Neither communal nor caste violence can be separated from gender violence. Ashish Nandy says "The slow, painful process of dismantling British India began with the great Calcutta riots and ended with the genocide in Punjab".32

Contemporary India has witnessed communal violence in various contexts such as destruction of Babri Mosque, the post-Godhra Gujarat riots of 2002. Various scholars have discussed communalism and its basis by understanding partition violence, nationalist ideology and Hindutva.

In Routine Violence (2005), Gyanendra Pandey discusses various factors involved in communal violence. According to Pandey, violence is involved in the very process of the 'production and reproduction of majorities and minorities'. Pandey attempts to analyze the essence of the Hindu nationalism that constructs the "other" of the nation within the nation along with an elaborate discussion on the violence against the "other" and the different periods within which the communal violence in the country broke out.

Hindutva constructed the Muslim community as its other by representing themselves as the nationalist, secularist with tolerance for other religions with their claims of humanism and nationalism. It also constructed Hinduism as a religion of the land that is 'aboriginal' and 'native', and Islam and Christianity as exotic religions of invaders. Hindutva leaders also started reconstructing the purportedly lost Hindu inheritance and attempted to
inculcate their beliefs in the minds of the Hindus. (38-39) They used the weapons of masculinity and patriarchy to encourage communalism. Within all these riots on Muslims rape is the significant weapon on the minority women to emasculate such religious communities. Molestation of women was thus believed to empower the Hindu masculinity.

Pandey's criticism of nationalist historiography points out that the history is (mis) represented by proclaiming that the Hindu as the hegemonic religious community of the nation. According to Antonio Gramsci as quoted by Pandey,

"the history of the subaltern groups is necessarily fragmented and episodic, every trace of independent initiative on the part of subaltern groups should therefore be of incalculable value for the integral historian... (T)his kind of history can only be dealt with monographically and each monograph requires an immense quantity of material which is often hard to collect." (59-60)

In the same way, in India, the past of partition violence in which Hindu/Muslim women were abducted, molested or killed is only revealed by the collection of the narratives but not in the nationalist history of India since it is written only in the perspective of hegemonic groups. The history that is recently constructed by Hindutva groups asserts that the land of Ayodhya belongs to Hindus for Rama (the Hindu divine male figure), along with his brothers lived in that place. Significant claim is that the spot in which the Babri Masque existed is the spot where Rama took birth. Such assertions construct a sense of loss out of which a few members of such communities would rage against those
who destroyed their cultural values or symbols. Such rage is not seen as intolerance of such communities but as an assertion of self-respect to regain the lost honour to their community in patriotic sense.

Pandey analyses the construction of community and identity which play an important role in shaping communal violence. Violence and community according to him belong to the premodern condition. Even the nation is a community and is naturalized community in the modern political scenario though the term community is used only for the smaller groups within the larger community called nation. The word community in India is used for all religious groups and often it is used for the linguistic groups and castes as well. In the present text, he also analyses the historical context in which the castes and sub-caste such as untouchables came under single identity called dalits.

Pandey critiques the declarations of accommodating character of Hinduism and its celebration of unity and diversity. He analyzes the claims regarding the accommodating character of the Indian Hindu culture along with the position of dalits within the Hinduism and status given to the people of same community. If we trace out the history of dalits, dalit community is the part of the majority community of Hindus and not part of it when it comes to social status. Dalits are part of the major community only constitutionally. The hegemonic community doesn't even provide them the status that is enjoyed by the minorities like Muslims or Sikhs or Jains. Ambedkar says the faith in which the people might live is mostly different from what religion do they belong to. Even though many dalits have not converted into other religions, they do not take part in
the rituals of Hindu temples or festivals (if not a few humiliating rituals exclusively meant for dalits) and most of them lived in different religious faiths which are no way related to Hinduism\textsuperscript{34}. Though Hindutva claims dalits as part of the Hindu religious community, still it would provide them a lowly status in the caste hierarchy since caste is the essential feature of Hinduism.

Hindu reformist movement, Mahatma Gandhi\textsuperscript{35} and present day Hindutva organizations are all in their different ways trying to relocate dalits into Hinduism or at least trying to retain them in Hinduism. Hindu religion by nature can not accommodate anyone outside the caste ladder. Caste is synonymous with Hinduism. The practice of untouchability and dalits being outcaste, it is difficult to keep dalits as integral part of Hinduism.

Pandey discusses the non-Hindu and non-Muslim status of dalits. Even the Pakistan government has banned the emigration of the lower castes since they anticipated the difficulty of the future of country without the people who perform scavenging, sweeping and removing night soil which are the essential services. The idea not only supports caste system but also fixed dalits to menial jobs. Here, whether dalits are Hindus or not is an important question to ponder over.(162-163) Kancha Ilaiah in his \textit{Why I am not Hindu}\textsuperscript{36} critiques contemporary Hindutva politics with an elaborate discussion on the position and culture of lower castes and dalits. He claims that dalits and lower castes are not part and parcel of Hinduism either culturally or socially. It is also evident that untouchables or dalits historically maintained separate religious faiths that provide a palpable cleavage between dalits and upper-caste Hindus.(71-101) Ambedkar specifies that the nation
consists of the communities such as touchable Hindus, untouchable Hindus, Christians, Muslims and Jains, which emphasizes the clear division between Hindu upper-castes and dalits and gives a special status to dalits as a separate community. Even in modern political scenario, as claimed by Ambedkar, dalits embraced Buddhism as a religion that puts an end for his quest for a humanist and social religion. Thus dalits' mass conversions into Buddhism, Christianity and Islam and other faiths took place in various phases of history.(162-64)

According to Pandey, dalits are not Hindus since they are in no way given equal or similar social status by Hindu community. The status of untouchables is still untouchable even when they enter other faiths such as Islam or Christianity. Other religions in India are considered only as counterparts to Hinduism by Hindutva, but dalits are considered not as counterpart community but inferior beings. Dalits are treated as untouchables because the traditional caste ideology. The scholarship of communalism has been neglecting the fact that Hindutva politics are not only anti-Muslim but anti-dalit as well. The atrocities taking place in various parts of the country are the clear examples caste violence though there has been a limited scholarship on caste violence in India.37 In Jhajjar, Haryana in October 2002, five dalit men were lynched by a group of Hindu communalists in a police station because the dalits had allegedly skinned a cow. The incident shows that communalism is equally violent towards dalits who are considered to be part of Hindu community.
Tracing out the reasons behind the communal violence, Sudhir Kakar another important scholar describes in *The Colours of Violence* (2000) the new identities that are constructed and shaped in the postcolonial, modern and later periods in India. He also discussed how the identity of Hindu became not only hegemonic but also more nationalist and progressive and the identity of Muslim then was considered fundamentalist.

**The construction of Modern Identities and Communal Violence**

In the modern world, the migration of people became very common as people from villages move to cities, and especially lower castes and dalits since they find this as a means through which they can escape from the economic deprivation and caste based discrimination in the villages. They move to slums however uncomfortable they are and some people also cross the borders of not only the states within the nation but also the boundaries of nation. This takes place among all the communities since urbanization became a common phenomenon in the contemporary society. So, people move out of their geographical, cultural, communal and religious communities. The loss of familiar neighbourhood, and loss of cultural homes and traditional work identities make communities and individuals to turn extremely nostalgic about their past traditions and cultural values. For example, Kakar says that many people believe that traditional ancient culture is linked to healthy eroticism, whereas modernity, with its popular cinema, television, fashions, co-education at schools and unisex atmosphere at work place degrades the morals of the society. The encounter of the communities with different cultural communities leads to introspection about “our own identity” and “our own
culture and tradition". As Kakar puts it, "In bringing together people in closer proximity, the processes of globalization paradoxically increase the self-consciousness which separates and differentiates." Globalization also becomes means of segregation though outwardly it brings different communities and cultures together. This sense of loss of cultural values creates a feeling of humiliation in the minds of the members of the communities. Kakar believes such feeling of humiliation leads to the feeling of being victim and thus causes the hatred, rebellious rage towards those responsible for such loss. Though the actual destruction of such cultural values is the resultant of globalization, economic conditions and other various factors, the community's rage turns against the immediate conspicuous enemy or the other.

Kakar also that a group consists of individuals who are firmly knitted with the bonds of 'love'. He says the sense identity comes with the identifications of the masses with a leader or mythical figure. But at the same time he says that the identities are not fixed or unswerving but they change according to the time and the period and their encounters with other identities. The identity Hindu is not same as the Hindu identity of the other periods in the history. What we call Hindu has emerged through the many centuries and encounters and change of beliefs and systems and its encounter with the more self-conscious religions such as Buddhism.

According to Kakar Hindu identity has two forms in post colonial world. One is the Hindu being nationalist and secularist which was formed during the nationalist movement and continued till the BJP and its extremist alliances constructed a recent identity of
Hindu where the Hindu is not just a nationalist or secularist but a victim of modernity and westernization and especially of invasion of Islam which has ruined its cultural symbols and monuments in India. This also creates sense of nostalgia for ancient traditional values and rages as a soldier against the other religions which are responsible for the above mentioned damage done to their past.

The Sangh Parivar claims that it is due to the rule of Islamic kings, Hindu monuments are demolished and it is the right of the present generation of Hindus to rebuild them to regain the honour to their community. The construction of the past is shaped by the concerns of the present. There is nothing like past but it is merely created for the continuation of certain values and beliefs according to Kakar.

The Hindu identity is based on the aboriginality, masculinity, and sense of pride and self-righteousness where as Muslim identity is considered as fundamentalist not only by Hindus but even Muslims take shelter under the umbrella of the fundamental identity that denies the hedonistic life and suspends the reality and rationality to an extent and a travel towards more religiosity and more orthodoxy.

Within the communal violence, dalit position is always questionable. Hindutva ideology leads to atrocities on dalits. Alongside, there is also clear hatred on dalits among caste Hindus which turns into caste violence in cases where dalits protest the caste Hindu dominance.
Religious Conflicts in the Modern World

The modern world has witnessed religious revitalization which is more to do with the individual identities of the communities than to do with the religious faiths. These cultural identities are based on religious affiliation. The community of believers is not only tied to the religious faith but also shares certain social, political and economic interests in common which may conflict with the interests of the other group of believers sharing the same geographical space.

Sudhir Kakar points out that communalism is a state of mind. He says, “The awareness of being community and the strong bond of community and religious faiths lead to communalism.” The violent side of the religious texts and the justification brought from the sacred sources of the religion, involves the fundamental values and releases some of the most violent passions. The religious texts or the feelings shape an individual with strong feelings and ideals with a strong deference for the self-esteem. In few religions, violence is described as a positive weapon to meet the goals of the religion. Legitimization of violence is something more visible according to Kakar as a reason behind the communal violence against other communities. Kakar also says there are a few economic interest involved in communal violence.

In case of Hindutva politics, there might be a deliberate inclusion of the lower castes only to use them as perpetrators of violence on other religious groups. There are a few cases where dalits are used as armed force of the Hindutva. Also, dalits do not share much cultural and social similarity with caste Hindus. According to Kakar, communal violence
also takes place between caste Hindu fundamentalists and dalits since dalits are not part of Hindu religion with equal status and they do not have much share in the economy.

**Communal Violence and Gender**

As I have mentioned earlier, communal or caste violence cannot be understood without looking at the gender factor involved in it. In several cases, violence is intended by the dominant group or individual to retain the power over the dominated. Various reasons can be traced out for the violent nature of males. The objectification of women is one of the significant factors that’s been strengthened by the nationalist movement in India by bringing comparison between the woman’s body and the land. As men treat women as their property, so they do posses a right to use or abuse it.

“Objectification is treating as a mere thing of what is really not a thing. It has multiple aspects, including the denial of autonomy and subjectivity, and the ideas of ownership, of fungibility (one is just like the others), and violability (it’s all right to break the thing up or abuse it). Not all forms of objectification posses all these features: for example, one may treat a fine painting as an object, thus denying its autonomy and subjectivity, without holding that it is all right to break it up. In the domain of human relations, however, sinister connections begin to be woven among these different aspects. At the heart of all of them, I would argue, is the idea of instrumentality: a thing, unlike a person, is an instrument or means to the ends of persons; it is not an end in itself. The objectification of women is primarily a denial that women are ends in themselves. It is because one has already made that denial, at some level of one’s awareness, that it becomes so
easy to deny women autonomy, to deny that their subjective experience matters, and, even, to begin to ignore qualitative differences between one and another, as pornography so easily does.

As man is the head of these properties, he is equally the owner of his woman, sometimes not only his wife but all women in the community. This idea supports the authority of man over women and keeps all the rights in his hands over his 'property'.

Culturally sanctioned power over women also becomes reason for violence against women by men. When there is subversion of male dominance, to retain their power men might use violence as a weapon. Rakha Ray says Men beat their wives not only to express their masculinity but also in order to constitute it in a social order that seems to have been disturbed. Perpetuating violence is one of the ways to force the powerless to accept the dominance of the dominant. While describing the domestic violence (manhandling wives) by substantiating through the literature on domestic violence, Raka Ray says, “and beating her because that is the only way you can reassert your authority over her at a moment when she does not seem willing to accept it.” So also with the case of hegemonic category in the society such as the dominant caste group or community generates violence to establish its power and authority over the dominated.

In case of sexual assaults on women during the communal riots, it is seen as the subjection of whole community to humiliation and disgrace. As women are not individuals in themselves, the humiliation and pain that they are subjected to, also will not end in themselves but will be attributed or directed to the community and/or the male
figure of the family. However it also serves the purpose of the infliction of pain on bodies. The sexual assault does not only include the sexuality but torture by burning and stabbing and so on. The atrocities committed on Muslims by Hindu fundamentalist in 2001 in Gujarat led to widespread discussion on communal violence. ‘One of the most horrific aspects of the Gujarat massacre was the prevalence of rape and sexual torture’ says Martha C. Nussbaum.(101) The Muslim women being belonging to the community, they violated and killed in order humiliate the community and thus emasculate the community.(115)

**Gender Violence, Culture and Economic Relations**

Kumkum Sangari’s essay on gender violence examines the multiple dimensions of violence through physical force and symbolic violence through inculcating the ideals of the patriarchy as legitimate norms of the societies, cultures and communities. It observes domestic violence, violence at the workplace, rape at the police station, humiliation at the courts (before law) that a rape victim experiences and violence that is perpetrated by the cultures as part of the traditional and ritualistic practices which are often ignored by law and the states are several ways in which the patriarchal norms operate to control women.43

According to Sangari, various forms of violence are located in economic relations of unequal power. She says dalit women are subjected to violence when they demand for material rights and middle class women for dowry, property question and so on. The upward mobility of dalits and their adoption of the upper caste religious idioms and ritual
also leads to upper-castes' violence on dalits and dalit women. Such violence against women often erupts as the public violence against dalit community and dalit women meant for public gaze besides the everyday violence continue to exist through the caste system, untouchability, casteist patriarchy, power relations and economic relation and so on.

What are the implications of the public exercise of patriarchal power? Collective crimes are symbolically much more effective because they are public and appear to be consensual; they seem to work better as ‘backlash’ and ‘retaliation’, and provide a modality that can be adapted by police men and villagers alike.

Sati is one of those pre-colonial forms of violence perpetrated in the name of tradition in upper-caste society. Sangari writes that the practices such as sati also had their communal connotations that help to distinguish between ‘their own’ women and those of the “other”. This also distinguishes dalit women from the upper-caste women as the existence of such practices like sati is not found in the culture of dalits. Since the justification for such practices in upper-caste society is related to the purity pollution question for the upper-castes would want to protect their women from being polluted and hence their caste from being polluted. Practices such sati meant to control women being polluted by lower caste and untouchable males and to control the sexuality of women.

Violence according to Sangari is a foundational and systemic feature of patriarchy. She analyses the legitimacy of the structure of patriarchy in the society that enables women to take active part in upholding the patriarchy in the society. Though women face
violence from family and community in case of their refusal of patriarchal norms, the significant factor involved in women being active partners in nurturing the traditional patriarchal society is the structure of patriarchy that invades the minds of the people irrespective of gender. The fact that there is no full male monopoly of institutional and interpersonal violence, suggests the obvious: that patriarchies are not the rule of men over women but systemic structures.(3)

According to Sangari, domestic violence has its own linkage to the economics of the family system. In Indian family system, a girl child has no property right in many cultures. Due to this the natal family’s support during the violent situation in the in-laws house is not possible and the abandoned (by husband/conjugal family) daughter is also seen as a burden on honour and economy of the family. Girl child is considered as a burden due to the traditional practices such as dowry and this also leads to the sex selective abortions in many upper-caste communities.

Dalit women face caste violence such as sexual exploitation by upper-caste males not due to their poverty alone, but due to their caste position which makes them vulnerable to violence. According to Tharu and Niranjana, Violence against dalit women has several dimensions one of which is the customary sanctions of upper-caste male’s access to dalit women.45
Gender Violence and Cultural Hegemony and Subjectivity

Veena Das discusses the formation of the subject in the context of witnessing violence. She discusses how the experience of social suffering and violence shapes the subjectivity and individual’s ability to engage and deal with the everyday life. Pain or the subjugation which is seen as a significant factor in the formation of subject by subject theorists can only be experienced in certain culturally accepted forms such as mourning and lamenting in case of women. Veena Das is looking at violence that is experienced every day which we can call as invisible violence which is generated through certain hegemonic norms of the society. She takes up the subject of a woman by name Asha who witnessed violence during partition. Presented through her interviews it is known that she became a widow at a very young age say in her early twenties. She allegedly lost her husband’s sister (sister-in-law) in the riots who was the only support for her in the conjugal family. A woman’s body becomes symbolic of the death of her husband. So she is forced to carry the memory of her husband by continuing to live up to the societal norms that are set for widowhood. Being a widow, her position is considered to be vulnerable for sexual threats or attacks. She can find her subjectivity only through maintaining living up to the normative strands of the cultural and patriarchal norms of widowhood. Veena Das discusses how violence of partition folded into every relationship and everyday life.

Caste Violence

Within the larger context of various categories of violence being discussed and theorized by scholars of social sciences and humanities (other than the media representation and literary works) I would discuss caste violence looking at media and other reports and dalit
women writing. Caste violence in contemporary India can be categorized into various different categories. Broadly I would distinguish caste violence into endemic violence/atrocities that dalits are subjected to and the symbolic non-physical forms of violence that dalits experience at various levels. Violence is viewed mostly on physical terms but in most cases, violence against dalits is also symbolic such as untouchability and humiliation associated with inferior position of caste, denial of human dignity.

Within the first category of physical violence or atrocities committed on dalits, I would discuss recent atrocities committed in contemporary India such as Chunduru, Karamchedu, where dalits faced collective violence by caste Hindus. Gopal Guru, one of the profound scholars of caste, believes that the reason behind inter-caste conflicts is the upward mobility of dalits and their voice raised against the hegemony of the upper-castes and their social, economic dominance. South Indian dalits have experienced such rage from upper-castes for their resistance towards the upper-caste dominance. By examining the various cases of caste conflict, Guru says that ‘the worst victims of caste violence are upwardly mobile dalits’. In many cases, there is also an economic dimension to the caste conflicts. For example, the demand of increment in wages has been the issue in various atrocities committed against dalits in south India. Also the assertion of self-respect is one of the reasons behind the caste conflicts. This shows that dalits are not only fighting against the economic deprivation but also the caste oppression that has been conspicuous in Indian society. Dalits fighting against the visible caste symbols also became the significant reason behind Chunduru atrocity. As most of the reports and scholars on the Chunduru massacre have pointed out, Chunduru was a village where the
dalits were better educated than the upper castes and had the privilege of economic independence from the upper castes for their livelihood due to the access to education and jobs in the public sector. Dalit youth were beginning to question traditional caste based hierarchies that existed in the village through everyday acts such as claiming space within everyday spaces like tea stalls, libraries and cinema halls. This subverted the power of the upper castes who had been dominating over dalits. This subversion of power, also led to the upper caste animosity against the dalits which is more conspicuous in post Chunduru anti-dalit backlash by upper-caste organizations. One important reason for the Chunduru atrocity was the solidarity of dalit community against caste Hindus. Another important feature of this atrocity is that it took place with the help of the police.48

Khairlanji is another example of violence on individual dalits who are fighting the inconspicuous forms of untouchability. It is an example of caste Hindu rage against those dalits who are not ready to confine themselves to the stereotypical status of dalits. The context for Khairlanji is that the Bhotmange family is an upwardly mobile family that does not fit into the traditional normative expectations of a dalit family. They have realised the importance of education in the lives of dalits for both social and economic prosperity. This invited the caste Hindu anger though the immediate context is the land clash between the caste Hindus and Bhotmange's family.

Another category of violence is generated through the different levels of patriarchy through caste dynamics. Dalit women who are subjugated and discriminated along caste lines also are the victims of internal patriarchy that makes them live under the dominance
of dalit men and subject them to physical violence, economic exploitation and symbolic violence as well.

In the category of symbolic caste violence, I would like to discuss the collective symbolic violence that dalits experience in the villages, work place and so on represented through dalit autobiographies. I would also discuss the non-physical symbolic caste violence experienced by individuals who enter spaces such as education, public sector employment and universities. I would also look at how dalit women suffer the internal/casteist patriarchy and hegemonic cultural norms of patriarchy that makes them inferior status in society and in the family well.

Caste is the everyday reality of our society. In my understanding, caste violence that appears in the reports, newspapers and other magazines is only the one form of physical violence that occurs periodically. But, caste system generates violence and subjects dalits to various forms of symbolic violence manifested through inferior caste position, humiliation at the work place or the modern spaces such as educational institutions and so on. Such experience of symbolic forms of untouchability present in every day life of dalits has not been discussed or expressed in various works on caste violence. I would look at such experiences which do not find their way easily to appear in academic discussion and scholarship on caste violence. Dalit autobiography and writing provide the space for dalits to express the experiences of such symbolic violence.
In 1916, Ambedkar returns to his home country in order to work for the Maharaja of Baroda. He had to go back without working there only due to lack of accommodation since he is an untouchable. Ambedkar assumes that since Parsis are not Hindus, there will be no question of untouchability and caste system. But when Parsis find out that an untouchable (Ambedkar) is staying in their hotel and has already defiled it, they don't step back to even abuse him physically. Though the details of the experience has been well expressed in his autobiographical notes, the pain and humiliation is always alien to a non-dalit. Ambedkar says that though he was not physically abused by anyone in the Parsi Inn, he could not forget the humiliation that he underwent in that situation. “...a scene which so long a period as 18 years has not succeeded in fading away. I can even now vividly recall it and never recall it without tears in my eyes.”

To discuss symbolic caste violence, it requires an authentic experience enriched by caste awareness. Once the awareness sets the individual free and free from the caste as well, it is possible to look at the caste system objectively. So, dalit literature is one of the means to bring out such symbolic violence shaped by caste system. Dalit literature is not just literature that is produced by dalits but it is written with the awareness (methods of investigation) of caste which would bring the caste consciousness into literature. So, even though the mainstream literature does not discuss or represent or even mention caste, it is not caste free. It is written under the unconscious influence of caste system working everywhere and reflected in the literature. But dalit literature (due to consciousness and awareness) is free from the enslavement of caste system thus caste free as well. For the present discussion of symbolic violence generated by caste which can as well be
categorized as caste violence, I would look at a few dalit autobiographies in translation written with caste consciousness.

In the next chapter, I would discuss dalit feminism and debates around feminism and critique of mainstream feminism by dalit feminist in order to provide my understanding of caste and gender politics. Also, the next chapter would help to present my idea of discussing caste violence form a dalit feminist perspective.
End Notes

1 In the village system, dalits live in the small hamlets at the outskirts of the village and at a distance from the upper caste streets. They are called wadas in Telugu, Cheri in Tamil and Keri in Kannada and by various names in various languages. These wadas can be found in modern free India also and the government recognizes the center of the village (where the other castes live) as the village but not the wada. Thus these wadas suffer from lack of roads, electricity, water and fuel resources, lack of conveyance, schools, post office, railroads and so on. See Ambedkar, B.R., "The Indian Ghetto-The Centre of Untouchability" Dr Baba Saheb Ambedkar Writings and Speeches, Bombay: Education Department of Maharashtra, 1989.

2 Dalit women are also the victims of customs such as the Devdasi and Jogini systems of dedication, of which more later. Also see Prabhavati, M, "Dalit Women in Contemporary Indian Situation" in P.G. Jogdand, 1995, p. 84.


4 Powar and Moon, 2008.

5 Kamma, Velama and Reddy castes in Andhra Pradesh, Nayar community in Kerala, Devar, Vellalla and others in Tamilnadu, Lingayats, Vokkaligas in Karnataka, Thakurs in Uttar Pradesh, Patels in Gujarat Bhumihars in Bihar and similar powerful castes in other Indian states became powerful land-owning communities in the colonial era. Though the castes such as Kamma, Reddy of Andhra Pradesh and Thakurs in Uttar Pradesh are Shudras according to the caste hierarchy, as they gained abundant lands in the colonial
period due to system such as Zamindari and Ryotwari, they became landlords, also became modern upper-castes and became violent towards dalit landless labourers.

6Dirks, 2001, pp.149-172


8Missionaries's educational initiatives provided an important avenue for dalit education. Nationalist movement and Samaj schools also helped dalits to enter education. See Chinna Rao, Yagati, 2003.

9 Omvedt, Gail, 1994

10 Shuddhi is a ritual only done for untouchables literally mean purification. After the purification, untouchable will become a touchable according to Samaj. It also means that untouchable castes in themselves are always impure even according to Samaj but there is remedy for it. Notably Brahmins and upper-castes need not to go through such purification. See Shayamala Gogu, 2003. pp.8-9


13 Adi bhrat and Adi hindu movements declared that Dalits are the indigenous rulers and aboriginal people of India where as Aryans (Brahmans) are invaders of India. See Ambedkar B.R. “Who Were Untouchables?” Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Writings And Speeches. Vol No. 1, Bombay: Education Department, Government of Maharrastra, 1990.


16 See Jogdand, 1995.p.97


18 Prasad, Vijay. 2000. p.113

19 Fazlul Hug, 1992, p.68


25 K. Kannabiran, 2007

26 Fanon, Frantz, 1961.

27 Fanon, Frantz, 1967.

28 Kawash Samira, 1999. p.243

29 Irene L. Gendzier, 1985. p.204


31 Tutun Mukherjee, 2008. p.72


34 Prashad Vijay, 2000.

36 Ilaiah, 1996.

37 Menon M. Dilip, 2006. p.4

38 Sudhir Kakar, 1995.


40 Martha C. Nussbaum, 2007. p.105-6

41 Henrietta Moore, 1994. p.139-155

42 Ray, Raka, 2007. p.91

43 Sangari, 2008.


45 Tharu, Niranjana, 1996. p.242


