

Boundary Crossings: Brahminical Patriarchy, Power, and Sexual Violence in COVID-19 in Odisha, India

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Abstract : The outbreak of the COVID-19 epidemic and the subsequent lockdown have significantly impacted India's political, structural, and economic systems and a rising gap between the rich and the disadvantaged, upper and lower caste. For Dalit women, such forms of subjugation were followed by socioeconomic uncertainty due to the pandemic's economic shutdown and labour oppressions. Dalit women have been the victims of the most oppression among the nation's underprivileged groups. Dalit women undergo systemic oppression at the hands of the state, caste, class, gender, and religious hegemony historically. Dalit women hold a subordinate position within the gender to their male counterparts and caste to their upper-caste counterparts. This paper examines how Brahminical patriarchy and state power severely affected Dalit/Adivasi women during COVID-19 in Odisha, India. In order to understand caste-based sexual violence, a total of five cases have been analysed from newspapers. Findings revealed that Covid-19 appears to have a significant physical, psychological, and economic impact on Dalit women. The intention of sexual harassment and rape perpetrated by upper caste men is to maintain power and patriarchal culture in society. Dalit women are economically, socially, and culturally marginalised, which effectively exacerbates the sense of impunity by perpetrators of violence against Dalit women. This issue requires special attention to end atrocities against Dalit women. Dalit women become the target of rape, sexual assault, and murder. Sexual violence against Dalit women cannot be fully explained without linkage to caste, gender, and power. Dominant caste comes through caste privilege-socio-economic and politically; these factors contribute to sexual violence against Dalit women. The findings revealed that state police manipulate sexual violence, and in so doing, they create and deny access to both services to get justice. This article has argued that understanding Brahminical culture and the legal impacts of state police on Dalit women's identity requires a nuanced analysis.

Keywords : COVID-19, dalit women, sexual violence, brahminical patriarchy, power

Conference Title : ICF 2022 : International Conference on Feminism

Conference Location : Auckland, New Zealand

Conference Dates : December 02-03, 2022