



# Dalit/Massacres – Syllabus Templates and Teaching Guides

Jyothi Justin



*Cartographies of Courage: Fictional Threads, Real Lives*

# Introduction

Welcome to *Dalit/Massacres - Syllabus Templates and Teaching Guides*

This teaching guide is designed to facilitate a critical, empathetic, and historically grounded understanding of Dalit massacres in India—a deeply painful yet essential chapter in the country’s democratic and social history. Caste-based violence, particularly against Dalits (formerly "untouchables"), reflects the entrenched structures of exclusion, oppression, and inequality that persist despite constitutional guarantees of equality and justice.

Through this module, students will examine how systemic caste hierarchies have led to brutal acts of violence, often with the complicity or apathy of the state. By focusing on key case studies such as Kizhavenmani, Tsundur, and Laxmanpur Bathe, this guide encourages learners to connect historical events with contemporary issues of caste discrimination, legal justice, and resistance.

More than a recounting of atrocities, this guide aims to create space for dialogue, reflection, and action, equipping students with the tools to understand caste as a living system of power and to envision pathways toward justice, dignity, and social transformation. Feel free to modify and use this classrooms with proper citations.

Jyothi Justin



# Template 1: Space-Caste-Gender in Dalit Masacres



Mapping Dalit  
Resistance and  
Discourse: Dalit  
Activism, Literature,  
and Theory in the  
Wake of Dalit  
Massacres

Atrocities, Massacres,  
and Caste: The  
Hidden Face of Dalit  
Violence

Background

1. Territory of Oppression: Caste, Spatial Segregation, and Struggle
2. Dalit Activism and Women in Dalit Activism
3. Dalit Literature and Feminist Criticism in Dialogue
4. Dalit Theory and Feminist Discourses

How activism, theory and literature led to an increase in atrocities and massacre of Dalits?

Atrocities vs Massacres

Space and caste relations

Locating the women of Dalit massacres – Where are they?


# Mapping Dalit Resistance and Discourse: Dalit Activism, Literature, and Theory in the Wake of Dalit Massacres

How activism, theory and literature led to an increase in atrocities and massacre of Dalits?

Territory of Oppression: Caste, Spatial Segregation, and Struggle

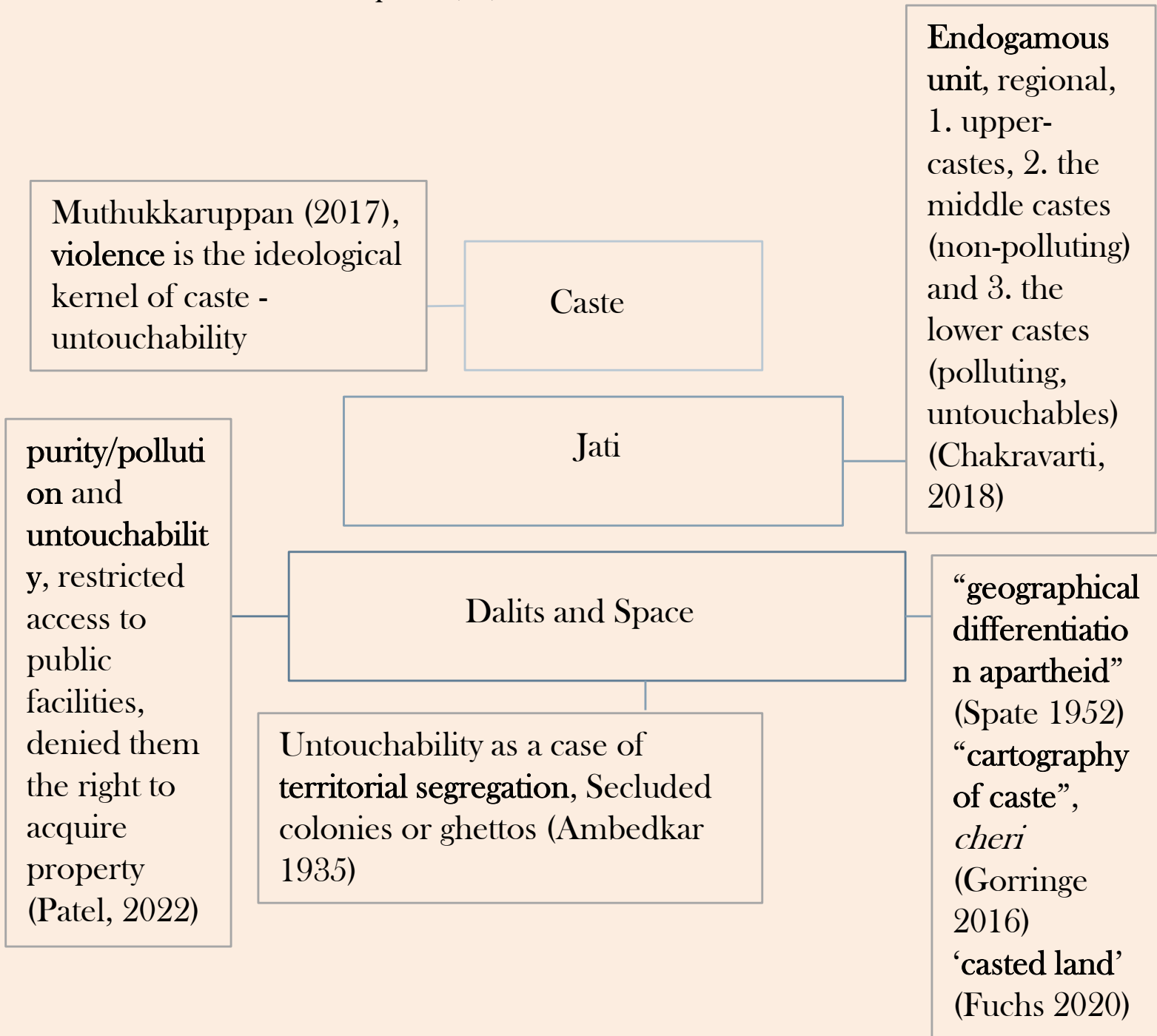
- Trace the meaning of the term 'Dalit'
- Locate Dalit within the caste system
- Space-caste relations
- Map Dalit Resistance and Discourses within:
  1. Dalit Activism - and Women in Dalit Activism
  2. Dalit Literature and Feminist Criticism in Dialogue
  3. Dalit Theory and Feminist Discourses in the Wake of Dalit Massacres.



*Cartographies of Courage: Fictional Threads, Real Lives*

Teltumbde (2010) notes about the **caste system** in Hinduism as:

a form of **social stratification** involving a mode of **hierarchically arranged**, closed endogamous strata, membership to which is ascribed by descent and between which contact is restricted and mobility impossible. The Indian word for caste is **jati**. When we refer to ‘caste’, we really speak of jati, **although many tend to confuse it with varna**, which refers to the basic classes, four in number, established in Hindu scripture (12).



# Dalit Activism

Socio-political movements aimed at opposing caste discrimination and social injustice.

Non-brahmin movement – Phule, Periyar. Sri Narayana Guru and Ambedkar.

CPIM – class struggles.

Women – Pawar and Moon (1989) women's participation in the Ambedkarite movement against untouchability.

Savitribai Phule to Kandasamy.

# Dalit Literature

Challenge the mainstream *savarna* representations of caste by asserting the Dalit experiences and identity.

Poetry, Dalit autobiographies – Bagul, Limbale, Kamble, Namdeo Dhasal, and Bama.

Now, fiction and plays – lack of massacre narratives like Teltumbde's (2010) *The Persistence of Caste*.

Dalit feminist literature – response to misrepresentation of caste and gender intersections in mainstream narratives.

Bama's Karukku, . . . Fiction by Kandasamy

# Dalit Theory

Literary and socio-political framework

- combat the historical and cultural caste-based discrimination.

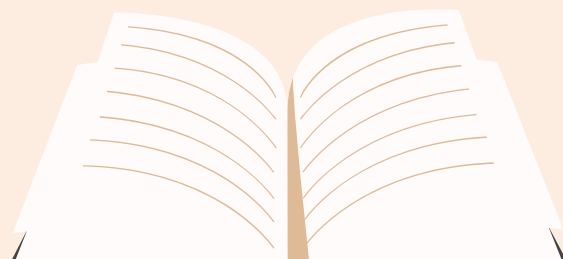
Dalit identity/ Dalitness –  
discrimination, struggle, and resilience  
(Chauhan 2023) –

Dalit experience – Guru (1995) –  
Dalit aesthetics – equality, liberty,  
justice and fraternity for the most  
depressed class in society (Kumari  
2021)

Dalit feminist theory – against  
‘homogenization’ (Mohanty 2003) and  
for ‘intersectionality’ (Crenshaw 1989)  
– Guru (1995) vs Rege (1998)

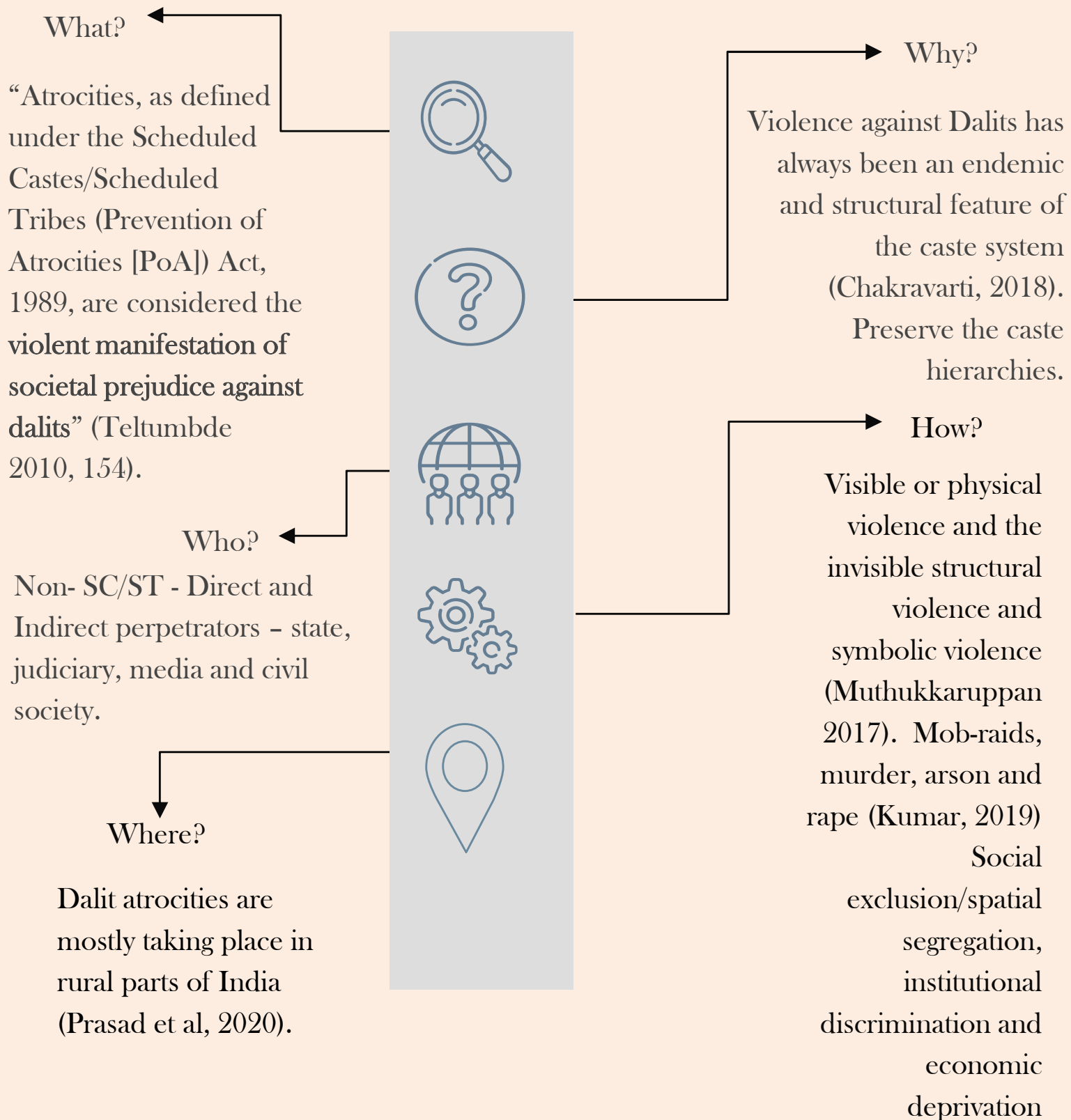
Activism, Literature and  
Theory led to an increase  
in Dalit atrocities and  
massacres . . .

*Cartographies of Courage: Fictional Threads, Real Lives*



# Atrocities, Massacres, and Caste: The Hidden Face of Dalit Violence

## Dalit Atrocities





- Symbolic and structural violence continue to take place in professional (Jaoul 2008), urban, and academic spaces.

## Reasons

- Caste-based atrocities mainly occur “when the Dalit attempts to trespass the rigid caste spaces” (Vandana 2021), that is, while “oppression can be said to be endemic to caste, a caste crime is invariably the result of its victims’ defiance” (Teltumbde 2010, 42).

- Assertion, Land disputes, relative weakness.

- **Justice and Prevention** - Venkatesan S. emphasizes the need to focus on social reform including land reforms to provide an enabling environment of social justice and caste conflict free India which will in turn lead to economic reform and Dalit development (1).

- The PoA Act implementation is still negligible (Jaoul 2008).

- Teltumbde (2018) critiques the PoA Act.

# Massacres

- Neglected – overshadowed by genocide studies/holocaust - lack of legal definition - ‘mass crime’ by Semelin (2003) - killing of even one individual could account to massacre (Corbin, 1992) or a minimum of three deaths should occur to consider an event as a massacre (Guatemala Human Rights Commission 1989).
- Massacre studies in the West – Corbin 1992; Semelin (2003); Dwyer and Lyndall (2012).
- Number of deaths involved in violence, time, and geographical location of the massacre (Holmes and Holmes, 1998).
- Indian massacres – reveal a gap in caste-based analysis - the Kilvenmani massacre (1968) in Tamil Nadu, Belchi massacre (1977) in Bihar and Karamchedu massacre (1985) in Andhra Pradesh (Satyanarayana 2014).
- Nature and context of massacres in postcolonial South Asian countries - regional frameworks - in India:- caste.
- Atrocities (passive noun) vs Massacre (active verb) + legality [The Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989].
- Violently removed from their geographical location through caste-based massacres executed by the upper caste often with the state averting its gaze intentionally.



## Dalit Massacres are

“an organized process of caste-based destruction that leads to the intentional killing of one or more Dalit(s) by one or more people (or the state), the latter especially upper caste, which adversely impact both the lives and properties of Dalits”.



# Three phases of massacres (Semelin 2002, 2005)

## Before

cultural, political and/or  
economical events before the  
massacre

## During

pertaining to the questions of  
how, who, where, and the role  
of the state machinery

## After

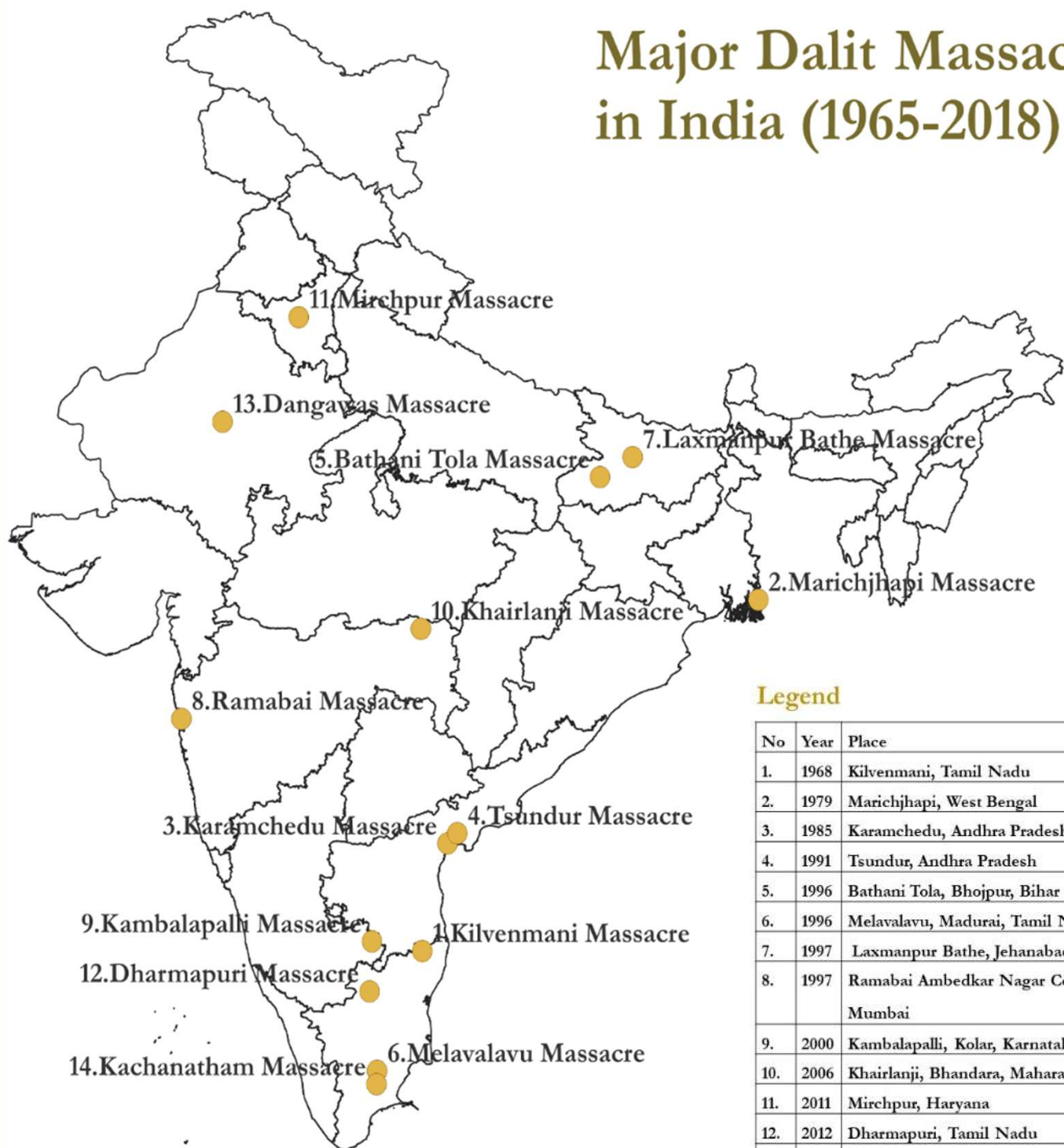
causalities, trauma,  
rehabilitation, survivor  
responses, revenge, legal  
proceedings, newspaper  
reporting, research and other  
studies

# Dalit Massacres – Space, Caste, and Gender

- Lack of a comprehensive study or a single document that systematically lists and analyzes these massacres in India over time.
- Spatial location of Dalits and the frequency of the massacres? - Southern States.
- **Hypothesis** - connection between caste and spatial location plays a crucial role in Dalit massacres: the caste identity of Dalits determines where they live, which makes them more visible and vulnerable to large-scale violence and massacres.



# Major Dalit Massacres in India (1965-2018)



## Legend

No	Year	Place
1.	1968	Kilvenmani, Tamil Nadu
2.	1979	Marichjhapi, West Bengal
3.	1985	Karamchedu, Andhra Pradesh
4.	1991	Tsundur, Andhra Pradesh
5.	1996	Bathani Tola, Bhojpur, Bihar
6.	1996	Melavalavu, Madurai, Tamil Nadu
7.	1997	Laxmanpur Bathe, Jehanabad, Bihar
8.	1997	Ramabai Ambedkar Nagar Colony, Mumbai
9.	2000	Kambalapalli, Kolar, Karnataka
10.	2006	Khairlanji, Bhandara, Maharashtra
11.	2011	Mirchpur, Haryana
12.	2012	Dharmapuri, Tamil Nadu
13.	2015	Dangawas, Nagaur, Rajasthan
14.	2018	Kachanatham, Sivagangai, Tamil Nadu

## Background: Locating the women of Dalit massacres/Dalit Women – Where are they?

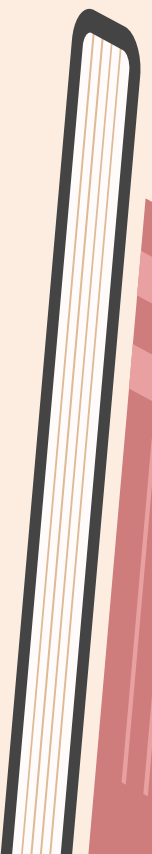
### Politics of difference

‘Gopal Guru (1998), Sharmila Rege (1998) ‘Dalit Feminist Standpoint’ , Chaya Datar (1999).

Dalit female experiences massacres are seldom studied or acknowledged – Lack of documentation.

### Caste identity and spatial location

Satyanarayana (2014) - “does not address the complexity of conceptualising caste in the context of questions raised by Dalit feminists and Other Backward Classes”.



Arson

Upper castes killed Dalits (Satyanarayan, 2014).

Rape/sex was used as a political weapon

Diwakar, 2020.

1980s and 1990s

The mass movements and Dalit uprisings.

Lack of spatial gender-based narratives

Fictional and non-fictional - Where are the women of Dalit massacres located?

*Cartographies of Courage: Fictional Threads, Real Lives*





## Readings: Massacres and Dalit Massacres

Balagopal, K. (1991). "Post-Chundur and Other Chundurs." *Economic and Political Weekly*: 2399-2405.

Berg, Dag-Erik. (2020). "The Karamchedu Killings and the Struggle to Uncover Untouchability." *Dynamics of Caste and Law* (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108779616.005>.

Bhatia, B. (1997). Massacre on the Banks of the Sone. *Economic and Political Weekly*, Dec. 20-26, Vol. 32, No. 51 (Dec. 20-26, 1997), pp. 3242-3245.

Dipankar, C. (2023) "Projection of the Atrocities on the Dalits." *Integrated Journal for Research in Arts and Humanities*, 3:103-105. doi: 10.55544/ijrah.3.2.17.

Dwyer, P. G., and Lyndall R. (2012). *The Massacre and History. Theatres of Violence*. Berghahn Books.

Dwyer, P. G., and Lyndall R. (2013). Massacre in the Old and New Worlds, C.1780-1820. *Journal of Genocide Research*, vol. 15, no. 2, 2013, pp. 111-115., <https://doi.org/10.1080/14623528.2013.789179>.

Fuchs, S. (2020) 'Give me the space to live': trauma, casted land and the search for restitution among the Meghwal survivors of the Dangawas massacre, *Contemporary South Asia*, 28:3, 392-407, DOI: 10.1080/09584935.2020.1801580.



Hartley R. J. (2007). To Massacre: A Perspective on Demographic Competition." *Anthropological Quarterly*, 80 (2007): 237 - 251. <https://doi.org/10.1353/ANQ.2007.0008>.

Hooper, G., Richards, J., and Watson, J. (2020). "Mapping Colonial Massacres and Frontier Violence in Australia: 'The Names of Places.'" *Cartographica: The International Journal for Geographic Information and Geovisualization* 55(3): 193-98. <https://doi.org/10.3138/cart-2019-0020>.

India: Act No. 33 of 1989, Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989, 30 January 1990, <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b52a1c.html>.

Jaoul, N. (2008). "The 'Righteous Anger' of the Powerless Investigating Dalit Outrage over Caste Violence." *South Asia Multidisciplinary Academic Journal* 2.

Mitra, A. (2005). Hyperbole About Massacre. *Economic and Political Weekly*. Vol. 40, Issue No. 20, 14. <https://www.epw.in/journal/2005/20/letters/hyperbole-about-massacre.html>.

Muthukkaruppan, P. (2017). Critique of caste violence: Explorations in theory. *Social Scientist* 45.1/2: 49-71.

Osiel, M. J. (1995). Ever again: Legal remembrance of administrative massacre. *University of Pennsylvania Law*



Prajapati, A., and Surya, G. (2022). Violence And Atrocities Against Dalits In India: Interrogating Caste System. Towards Excellence 14.1.

Prasad, D., and Bibhar, S. S. (2020). Locating the Atrocities Against Dalits: An Analytical Approach. Contemporary Voice of Dalit, 12(1), 8-18. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2455328X19898416>

Semelin, J. (2002). From massacre to the genocidal process. International Social Science Journal, 54(174), 433-442. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2451.00397>.

Semelin, J. (2003). Toward a vocabulary of massacre and genocide. Journal of Genocide Research, 5(2), 193-210. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14623520305660>.

Sinha, A., and Sinha, I. (1996). "State, Class and 'Sena' Nexus: Bathani Tola Massacre." Economic and Political Weekly, vol. 31, no. 44, pp. 2908-12. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4404736>.

Sushmita. (2014). Politics of Massacres and Resistance. Economic and Political Weekly, 49(2), 41-45. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24479013>.

Teltumbde, A. (2010). The Persistence of Caste. India: Navayana Publishing.

Venkatesan. S. (2009). Caste Violence and Dalit Deprivation in India, A Capability Approach, Indian Institute of Dalit Studies, pp. 5-16.

Zelizer, B. (2000). Remembering to Forget Holocaust Memory through the Camera's Eye. The University of Chicago Press.



# Template 2. Dalit Massacres in India

## Key Concepts

- Caste system and untouchability
- Dalit identity and assertion
- Structural violence
- State complicity and impunity
- Human rights and social justice
- Resistance and reform movements



## Session 1: Introduction to Caste and Dalit Identity

- Overview of caste system in India
- Ambedkar's critique of caste and his role in Dalit empowerment
- The constitutional abolition of untouchability vs. lived reality

## Session 2-4: Case Studies of Dalit Massacres

### Introduction to Massacres and Dalit Massacres

#### Case Study 1: Kilvenmani Massacre (1968) - Tamil Nadu

#### Case Study 2: Marichjhapi (1979) - West Bengal

Refer *Cartographies of Courage: Fictional Threads, Real Lives*

### Activities:

- Timelines and mapping of caste violence
- Group presentations on each case

## Session 3: State, Justice, and Media

- Role of police and judiciary
- Media coverage bias
- Delayed or denied justice

### Reading & Viewing:

- Reports from Newspapers, Government and NGOs
- Documentary viewing



## Session 4: Dalit Resistance and Movements

- Dalit Panther Movement
- Bahujan politics (e.g., BSP)
- Grassroots Dalit women's organizing
- Dalit literature, poetry, and media activism

## Session 5: Reflection, Project Work, and Action

- Group discussions
- Research papers or digital projects
- Poster campaigns or awareness videos
- Reflection journals

## Assessment Methods

- Short Essays / Response Papers
- Group Presentations
- Research Projects (individual or group)
- Debates (e.g., on affirmative action)
- Journals / Reflective Writing
- Final Assessment: Analyzing a massacre with recommendations for justice reforms



# Teaching Materials

## Primary Sources

- Court documents and FIRs
- Human Rights reports )
- Testimonies (e.g., survivors' interviews)

## Secondary Sources

- Books:
- Articles and media coverage
- Documentaries

Refer: *Cartographies of Courage: Fictional Threads, Real Lives* for ideas on sources!

*Cartographies of Courage: Fictional Threads, Real Lives*



## Teaching Materials

### Primary Sources

- Court documents and FIRs
- Human Rights reports )
- Testimonies (e.g., survivors' interviews)

### Secondary Sources

- Books:
- Articles and media coverage
- Documentaries

Refer: *Cartographies of Courage: Fictional Threads, Real Lives* for ideas on sources!



# Resources

## Dalit Resources Online:

- <https://www.surajyengde.com/bahujan-library/>
- <http://ambedkar.org/>
- Underprivileged Minorities in India : Dalits and Tribals  
A Cartographic Approach -  
<https://books.openedition.org/ifp/9938>
- Census Scheduled Caste caste distribution map India by  
state and union territory -  
[https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:2011\\_Census\\_Scheduled\\_Caste\\_caste\\_distribution\\_map\\_India\\_by\\_state\\_and\\_union\\_territory.svg](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:2011_Census_Scheduled_Caste_caste_distribution_map_India_by_state_and_union_territory.svg)



# Resources

## Dalit Resources Online:

- <https://www.surajyengde.com/bahujan-library/>
- <http://ambedkar.org/>
- Underprivileged Minorities in India : Dalits and Tribals  
A Cartographic Approach -  
<https://books.openedition.org/ifp/9938>
- Census Scheduled Caste caste distribution map India by  
state and union territory -  
[https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:2011\\_Census\\_Scheduled\\_Caste\\_caste\\_distribution\\_map\\_India\\_by\\_state\\_and\\_union\\_territory.svg](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:2011_Census_Scheduled_Caste_caste_distribution_map_India_by_state_and_union_territory.svg)

