

# The Violent Intimate: Reflections from Rural North India

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## Abstract

*Empirical in nature, the paper builds upon the narratives constructed by the Dalit women in rural Bihar to make sense of both physical and mental (emotional) violent experiences in their respective 'private', i.e. domestic lives. In doing so, the author is well aware of the fluidity of the 'public-private' spheres' distinction underlined in the feminist discourse and scholarship. Broadly located within the conceptual apparatuses of Dalit patriarchy & Dalit masculinity, the paper draws out how narratives serve to co-construct forms & experiences of violence in private and domestic domains of their lives to reflect upon their 'constructed' meanings by the Dalit women. The paper by centering Dalit women's lived experiences of pain, hurt and humiliation within the 'domestic' sphere argues that Dalit patriarchy and Dalit masculinity as conceptual categories are relevant for further feminist analysis.*

**Keywords:** Bihar, Dalit women, Dalit Patriarchy, Violence, Domestic sphere

## Introduction

With the ever-growing and vibrant feminist scholarship, it is increasingly being understood that the social categories of study cannot be taken as homogenous rather there are multiple layers to it adding to its increasing fluidity and complexity. It is all the more relevant for the conceptual categories of both patriarchy and masculinity. Right from its initial feminist understanding as male's power over females, it has been conceptually deconstructed and 'fractured' based on empirical evidences and thus have evolved in its multiplicity. Such multiple modalities of patriarchy and masculinity are evident in racial ('White') patriarchy, Black patriarchy, 'Brahminic' patriarchy, Dalit patriarchy and so on. The paper is an attempt to underline the possibilities and empirically evident instances of Dalit patriarchy and Dalit masculinity within the 'private/familial/marital' relations and spheres of Dalit women's everyday lived experiences. In doing so, the study is cognizant of the futility of the 'public-private' distinction as highlighted by Pateman for whom 'feminist criticism is primarily directed at the separation and opposition between the

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