

Why are Folks So Inclined to Speak for and Erase Dalit People's Wisdom?

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There has been a recent spate of speculative publications on Dalit women by anyone and everyone to validate themselves as academics, journalists, editorial writers, policy experts, global anti caste consultants, subaltern studies space makers and global solidarity town criers etc. Majority of these folk creep on the walls of Dalit women, breeze through Savari, RTI and other such valid publications and create master mix versions that are devoid of the Dalit voices and the truths they speak for. When Dalits are publishing in their collectively created spaces about their struggles and truths, how does the need arise for any folk to deliberately speak for Dalits while completely erasing Dalit people's wisdom? What are the reasons behind such academic practices to meticulously minus Dalit voices while documenting Dalit lives?

It can only happen for few extractive and exploitative reasons. Here are two specific examples: An academic who was educated at JNU writes a super fast "Caste as Spectacle" academic response to current atrocities against Dalits.

It had earlier been submitted to a Dalit Bahujan self-determined publishing space, where the editors had clearly requested the author to a) cite references of Dalit Bahujan women authors who have put forward arguments on the same subject b) have also contested writings on Dalit Bahujan women by others that do not include their voices.

The editors also informed the academic about the commitment of Dalit Bahujan women to preventing erasure of Dalit Bahujan women authors by being attentive to their knowledge production in their own words.

The article, a speculative piece (since it does not have any references and is without any link backs) is then published as is on an online platform! Read [here](#).

In another similar instance, an [article](#) published on 05 May 2016 in the media watchdog "The Hoot" is uncannily similar to the [open letter](#) published by SAVARI in 2014. Despite the Facebook page of SAVARI pointing this out, there has been no apology and the hard work of Dalit-Bahujan women working together in a moment of urgency stays in the name of a male author in The Hoot to this day.

The hyper urgency to help oneself to material produced by Dalit Bahujan Adivasi (DBA) women need to be deliberated upon in such contexts. One needs to know if any logical reasoning exists for such academic to deliberately eliminate referencing to published material, when specifically requested to cite Dalit Bahujan women's articles that have already published on the same subject.

As a result of such repeated academic erasures and intellectual assaults on Dalit Bahujan wisdom in such scenarios, and as a responsible framing of more such possibilities, lets deconstruct the problem, analyze the issue and its connected issues at hand, with the goal of intentionally constructing a response that is solution oriented and in the best interests of the Dalit, Bahujan, Adivasi communities.

The following are a series of academic, social, cultural and political accountability questions to aid in problem deconstruction. A major intention is to broaden the conversation to create a heightened understanding of appropriations, invisibilizations, colonizations, marginalizations and erasures of DBA voices, wisdom and assertions:

1. What is taught at JNU and other such institutional spaces regarding academic research and publication processes?
2. How do caste, faith and class locations, personal values, gender based understanding of equity, individual and community accountability structures inform researcher's ethics?
3. Would the researcher utilize the same erasure methods to speak so authoritatively and without any references when publishing about atrocities impacting their community?
4. How is all of this located in the context of caste patriarchy?
5. How does it keep giving rise to few corrupt Dalit Bahujan male and female enterprisers that are enticed to benefit from systemic, Brahmin-

Savarna, white, capitalistic, non-profit machines and academic institutions in the local and global spaces?

6. How can individuals, publishing spaces, entities and organizations hold themselves accountable to equitable navigation of sharing DBA truths? What are the layers of accountability that need to be structured?

Few plausible scenarios of accountability that need to be considered.

1. The role of institutions of higher learning. The supposed bastions of liberating thought and transforming lives need to assess their relevance and pedagogical tools given historical evidence of institutional atrocities against **DBA faculty** and **student bases**. Brahmin-Savarna dominated institutions that offer subaltern studies and teach DBA students period, need to examine their **functionality, fairness and fraudulent practices** they have in place. They need to assess how their caste politics are most damaging to the dreams, visions, learning and career building of DBA folk in their institutions. The utter disregard these spaces perpetuate regarding navigation of DBA experiences by Brahmin savarna supremacists (students, administration and faculty alike) is essentially a primary layer of accountability. Within that context, the irresponsibility of subalterns violating and erasing other subaltern groups' experiences is another sub layer, which is learned perpetuation of violence of one sub group against another. As we all know, institutional accountability as manifested through policy, leadership styles and campus cultures is key source of information as to how individuals in those spaces learn and operate.
2. The erasure, distortion and violent intrusion caused by Brahmin -Savarna social saviors through publishing spaces, left political arenas and non-profit entities, is another accountability layer in the larger social and interconnected context of extended impact. As most of these spaces are owned and or dominated by Brahmin-Savarnas who push narratives that solely benefit them at the cost of the marginalized they allegedly work to benefit, it is necessary to delve into how accountability can be instituted here.
3. The over simplified, unreal, untruthful and illogical racialization and fetishization of Dalitness that seem to be an easy, divisive, escapist and controversial retort that most so called caste and anti caste experts are inciting in social media discourses that negatively impacts years and years of complex DBA and delicate inter-and intra-

community solidarities in the making is a layer of accountability to be very much considered.

4. The misuse of the identity "Ambedkerite" to create misogynistic, voyeuristic, disconnected, self centered problematic bodies of work that is giving rise to irresponsible anti caste actors that have no accountability to their DBA communities (abroad or at home) and are mis-utilizing and misrepresenting centuries of resistance with their half-baked truths is a layer of accountability to be pondered upon. This neoliberal agenda is allowing anti-intellectual and inauthentic squatters who do not even care to demonstrate real purpose or values.
5. The intentionally limited and narrow portrayal of DBA women's truths is yet another aspect that need to be considered for accountability. These narratives are vilifying in nature or consist of DBA women's pain dramatically storified for academic, media and non-profit consumption. Such capitalistic predatory behaviors (of privileged women) lead to selling of stories of DBA women's trauma and pain on institutional stages, aided by Brahmin – savarna, white and other mindless accomplices that need to be checked as this can lead to a trend by these actors to perform false victim-hood to avoid being held accountable.

And to finally analyze how all of this leads to local, state wide, regional and global distortions that are up for grabs as evidenced by multiple subaltern groups speaking for Dalits in recent times, while at the center of that interest is their selfish academic, non-profit career surges and social visibilities that are harmful. Those empty solidarities are not changing the material conditions of DBA but continue to perpetuate violence in the most intellectual ways and spaces possible. This is how Brahmin-Savarna supremacy works in its latest iteration in a world propelled by aggressive urgency to spew instant intellect sans ethics and accountability. How to undo that is the big and essential question one need to ask oneself and how then it is contributing to all this violence through identities, quests and mediocrities is then to be deeply reflected upon.

This article was also published in [SAVARI](#).