SEEING THE UNSEEN: LOCATING THE WOMEN OF INDEPENDENT INDIA'S DALIT MASSACRES USING FEMINIST GEOCRITICISM AND DIGITAL CARTOGRAPHY

Ph.D. Thesis

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I hereby certify that the work which is being presented in the thesis entitled **SEEING THE UNSEEN: LOCATING THE WOMEN OF INDEPENDENT INDIA'S DALIT MASSACRES USING FEMINIST GEOCRITICISM AND DIGITAL CARTOGRAPHY** in the partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY** and submitted in the **SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES, Indian Institute of Technology Indore**, is an authentic record of my own work carried out during the time period from August, 2020 to February, 2025 under the supervision of Prof. Nirmala Menon, Professor, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology, Indore.

The matter presented in this thesis has not been submitted by me for the award of any other degree of this or any other institute.

(JYOTHI JUSTIN)

This is to certify that the above statement made by the candidate is correct to the best of my knowledge.

(Prof. NIRMALA MENON)

JYOTHI JUSTIN has successfully given her Ph.D. Oral Examination held on **30 June 2025.**

(Prof. NIRMALA MENON)

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To Sakthikulangara – a space of bitter-sweet memories, to all genders who are still fighting for equal opportunities, and to all who endure the injustices of the caste system.

SYNOPSIS

Introduction

Dalits are the broken, or oppressed castes in India classified as the Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs) and Other Backward Classes (OBCs). They are often victimised through structural hierarchy of the caste system which denies them basic human rights and access to resources. Casteist oppression of the Dalits in India also manifests in the form of spatial or territorial segregation. This socio-spatial segregation of Dalits or spatial inequality and hierarchical access to societal and natural resources is based on the concepts of purity/pollution and untouchability of the caste system. Dalit scholars have explored the caste-based spatial segregation as, "geographical differentiation apartheid" (Spate 1952) or the cartography of caste (Gorringe 2016) that is still prevalent in rural India where the Dalits are relegated to the outskirts of the villages called *cheris*, colonies or ghettos (Ambedkar 1935). Ambedkar saw untouchability, a practice against the basic dignity of Dalits, as "a case of territorial segregation" (Rao 2009). Caste in India is thus inextricably linked to space and his views indicate that space should be considered as an intersectional category while attempting to understand Dalit identity and Dalit experiences.

The interconnections between the spatial location and the caste identity of individuals in Dalit massacres, demands that we analyze the impact of other intersectional factors like gender, class, ability, among others, on violence against Dalits. Dalit women, for instance, "suffer from the 'triple burden' of gender bias, caste discrimination, and economic deprivation" (Sabharwal and Sonalkar 2015) which is elevated during massacres. This study investigates the question, "Where are the women survivors of independent India's Dalit Massacres?". By building upon existing Dalit scholarship on caste and space, this research aims to understand the relations among space, caste and gender in Dalit massacres. This is achieved through comprehensive case studies of

selected Dalit massacres, the methodology and results of which are also published in an open-access spatial archive.

Background and Literature Review

The study begins with a comprehensive literature review of the broader discourses and causal factors of Dalit atrocities and massacres. The three main areas identified in this context are (a) Dalit activism, (b) Dalit literature, and (c) Dalit theory. Dalit activism including anti-caste movements by Dalit leaders and communist class struggles that empowered the Dalit labourers to fight for their rights which further led to a rise in caste-based atrocities (Teltumbde 2010). Dalit women's activism, however, is largely silenced in the mainstream narratives with a few exceptions like Pawar and Moon (1989). This has led to Dalit women asserting their intersectional identity and struggles in the recent times.

Dalit literature is used as a means to preserve Dalit identity, self-respect and heritage, and to protest against the caste-based social injustice. The absence and misrepresentation of female Dalit voices later led to the emergence of Dalit feminist literature. However, Dalit narratives, both fictional and non-fictional rarely depict Dalit massacres. The emerging field of literature of Dalit massacres offers vast potential for further fictional and non-fictional explorations. Dalit theory, on the other hand, is a literary and socio-political framework that attempts to combat the historical and cultural caste-based discrimination of the Dalits. Dalit identity, Dalit lived experience, *Dalitude* and Dalit aesthetics are the key concepts of the theory. Dalit woman's lived experiences are different and unique as they navigate through the triple burden of gender, class and caste-based discrimination. Dalit feminist theory is founded on foregrounding this intersectionality against the homogenisation of women's experiences (Mohanty 2003). Dalit women should therefore 'talk differently', and protest against 'Dalit patriarchy' while asserting their 'politics of difference' (Guru 1995). Rege (1998) formulated the 'Dalit Feminist

Standpoint' where she argues and suggests the incorporation of non-Dalit feminists (or allies) to enrich the Dalit feminist theory. Consequently, Dalit activism, Dalit literature, and Dalit theory empowered Dalits to assert their basic rights and to question the caste hierarchies which in turn led to an increase in atrocities and massacres.

"Atrocities, as defined under the Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities [PoA]) Act, 1989, are considered the violent manifestation of societal prejudice against Dalits" (Teltumbde 2010). Teltumbde (2010) in his extensive study of the Khairlanji massacre (2006), establishes that the ubiquitous anti-Dalit bias of the state, the judiciary, the media and civil society enable the perpetrators (usually upper-caste) to commit anti-Dalit atrocities. Dalits endure physical and mental assault during atrocities. Dalit atrocities are mostly taking place in rural parts of India (Prasad et al., 2020) and occur "when the Dalit attempts to trespass the rigid caste spaces" (Vandana 2021). The ultimate aim of caste crimes stemming from caste prejudice, is to teach the Dalits a lesson or to show them their right place within the social hierarchies of the caste system. The Prevention of Atrocities (PoA) Act, 1989 is the governmental and institutional response to the rise in Dalit atrocities but its implementation is still negligible due to institutional caste bias (Jaoul 2008). Social reform including land reforms can provide social justice by eradicating caste conflict in India and lead to economic reform and development of Dalits.

The literature review (Corbin 1992; Semelin 2003; Dwyer and Ryan, 2012 & 2013) conducted for this study, suggests that the existing epistemologies of massacres are mostly Western/European. Scholars remain divided on the definition and theoretical framework of massacres. The nature and context of massacres in postcolonial South Asian countries can be understood only through contextualized historical and cultural readings of the regional frameworks, one of which in India, is caste. A major problem encountered while researching Indian Dalit massacres is that the term 'atrocity' is favored to 'massacre' in Dalit scholarship thereby indicating a resistance to

using the latter. This is due to legal (the existence of PoA Act and the absence of a legal definition of massacres) and semantic reasons (atrocity is a passive noun that downplays the violence whereas 'massacre' is an active verb that conveys its full brutality). This study asserts the significance of differentiating and acknowledging Dalit massacres from Dalit atrocities.

The thesis defines Dalit massacre broadly as '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'. Dalit massacres are a new form of caste violence different from the caste atrocities that were already prevalent in India as it began in response to the increasing Dalit assertion of basic rights and dignity. Dalits, as India's marginalized indigenous community, are often violently displaced by caste-based massacres carried out by upper castes, with the state deliberately turning a blind eye. Studying Dalit massacres requires examining three phases (Semelin, 2003): 1) the cultural, political and/or economical events before the massacre leading to the violence, 2) the events during the massacre (addressing how, who, where, and the role of the state machinery) and 3) the events after the massacre (causalities, trauma, rehabilitation, survivor responses, revenge, legal proceedings, newspaper reporting, research and other studies).

The literature review on Dalit massacres reveals the lack of a comprehensive study or a single document that systematically lists and analyses these massacres in India over time (studies on specific massacres like Teltumbde 2010 is present). As part of this study, a database of the prominent Dalit massacres after independence is created and mapped, from various sources from newspapers to research articles and books. The mappings showed that the major post-independence Dalit massacres are concentrated in the southern states. The current study hypothesizes that this relation between caste and space plays a crucial role in Dalit massacres, that is, the caste identity

of Dalits determines where they live, which makes them, especially Dalit women, spatially vulnerable to massacres. Research and theoretical work on this relation is scarce which led to the main research question of this study, "Where are the women of independent India's Dalit Massacres?"

Dalit woman's assertion of fundamental rights often instigates the upper caste to commit massacres as in the Khairlanji massacre (2006) and the Bathani Tola massacre (1996). Dalit women face both gender and caste oppression, based on their caste location, especially sexual violence, harassment and abuse by upper caste in their daily life in villages but this violence is escalated during massacres. Women endure both gender and caste-based violence during Dalit massacres, with rape and sexual violence often used as political tools to silence victims, their families and communities. Lack of proper documentation of violence against women during the massacres, low rates of conviction and the apathy of the police force makes it even more difficult to understand the Dalit woman's experiences after the massacres.

Theorizing Dalit feminism in the context of Dalit massacres is complex, as upper-caste women, despite their lower position in the caste hierarchy, act as enablers or perpetrators (as seen in Tsunduru and Khairlanji). Therefore, massacre experiences of the upper caste and lower caste women should be analysed separately since, intersectionality – of gender and caste – operates during Dalit massacres. Intersectional factors like gender and caste calls for recognition of the politics of differences in the lived experiences of women within the locations that they inhabit. In the research front, Dalit female experiences, especially in Dalit massacres, are seldom studied or acknowledged. The existing research and narratives on Dalit massacres either fail to acknowledge the spatial identity (historical/cultural/political location) of Dalits or that of the gendered (female) experiences. While research on individual massacres exists, there is a noticeable absence of comparative studies on Dalit massacres or investigations into fictional and non-fictional depictions of these

tragedies — especially from a feminist perspective. The thesis proposes and applies a mixed methodology of feminist geocriticism (qualitative) and digital cartography (quantitative, here GIS/Geographic Information Systems) to visualise and investigate the relations among space, caste, and gender in Indian Dalit massacres. The female survivors and their experiences are identified from fictional and non-fictional narratives through comprehensive case studies of the Kilvenmani massacre (1968) and the Marichjhapi massacre (1979), each of which are studied separately and in comparison.

Research Gaps, Questions and Objectives

An extensive exploration of the research conducted on the Dalit massacres in India led to the following conclusions:

1. there is a lack of female survivor accounts in both fictional and non-fictional texts on the massacres.

2. there are no comparative studies of Dalit massacres or the female experiences of the massacres that highlights the relations among space, caste and gender.

3. there are no legal or theoretical frameworks for understanding Dalit massacres in India.

4. there is a lack of educational resources on Dalit massacres.

5. there are no digital humanities or spatial humanities (Feminist geospatial/GIS) projects focusing on Dalit massacres and feminist geography.

Based on the gaps identified above, the following are the primary and secondary research questions of this study.

1. Understand the relations among space, caste, and gender in Dalit massacres. For this the study proceeds with the hypothesis that there exists a relation among space, caste, and gender in Dalit massacres which in turn determines the gendered experiences of the survivors.

2. Exploring the above question requires identifying female experiences of Dalit massacres from both fictional and non-fictional sources. The secondary research question therefore becomes "Where are the female fictional and historical representations of Dalit massacres located (before, during and post the massacres) and how do their experiences differ from that of the men based on their spatial identity?"

In accordance with the research questions stated, primary objectives of this study are:

1. to understand the relations among space, caste, and gender (female) in Dalit massacres.

2. to develop and apply a mixed methodology that is a combination of feminist geocriticism (qualitative) and digital cartography (quantitative) that can effectively reveal the space, caste, and gender relations in Dalit massacres.

3. to compare Dalit massacres and to understand the similarities and differences in the experiences of the female survivors using the Kilvenmani massacre (1968) and the Marichjhapi massacre (1979) as case studies.

4. to foreground female narratives of selected Dalit massacres in India using a spatial archive.

Secondary objectives are:

1. to contribute to the existing Dalit scholarship by theorizing on Dalit massacres. The study proposes a definition, legal, theoretical and pedagogical frameworks for understanding and addressing Dalit massacres in India. It aims to initiate discussions and policy recommendations on the underexplored domain of Dalit massacres in India.

2. to develop an open-access spatial archive of the historical and fictional female survivors of the selected Dalit massacres that

can serve as a prototype for similar Indian feminist geospatial projects in the future.

Methodology and Theoretical Framework

This study uses a mixed-methodology, combining feminist geocriticism for qualitative analysis with digital cartography for quantitative analysis to understand the relation between gender and space from a caste-perspective. It is drawn from the geocritical approaches of Westphal (2007) and Tally (2011), digital cartography, feminist geographic information science (Kwan 2002a & b; Pavlovskaya 2009; McLafferty 2002), feminist geography (Nelson and Seager 2008; Hanson 1984) and feminist geocriticism (Wells 2017; Wrede 2015). Prominent Dalit massacres from two consecutive decades of independent India (1960-1980) are selected: the Kilvenmani massacre of Tamil Nadu (1968) and the Marichjhapi massacre of West Bengal (1979).

Steps in Methodology: Following the geocritical pattern, first the place of the massacre is identified followed by the identification of narratives, English fictional and non-fictional, suited for the study. The women in the selected narratives on the massacres are identified next, following a feminist geocritical pattern resulting in the creation of a database that is utilized for the cartographic visualization. The data on the survivors are manually scraped to create a database which is later geocoded with the location during or before the massacre. The real survivors are identified from online newspaper reports, non-fictional works like oral history, and research articles. The fictional women are identified from selected literary and visual narratives.

The steps involved in mapping are: manual geoparsing (locating the survivors within their real places from diverse sources), geocoding the data i.e., assigning a location to the parsed data (the coordinates for the places are obtained from Google maps) and lastly georectifying historical maps wherever required (using QGIS) to address the temporal concerns. The maps thus created when embedded in a

website serves as a spatial archive with interactive visualisation that enables readers to explore and formulate new questions on visualizing multivariable spatial data and to apply the tool creatively. The literary and cartographic analysis are utilized to confirm the hypothesis of the relation among caste, space, and gender in Dalit massacres. The digital maps on the massacres are compiled and published in an open-access spatial archive using ArcGIS online. The archive features a main map of major Dalit massacres in independent India, with interactive spatial hypertexts to detailed maps of each massacre. Besides a detailed textual and cartographic analysis of the female experiences of each of the massacres selected, a comparative analysis of the Dalit massacres is also conducted. Literary (cross-fictionality, and intertextuality), historical (Comparative Historical Analysis/CHA)), and cultural (comparative cultural studies) comparative theoretical frameworks alongside the primary frameworks of feminist geocriticism and digital cartography are employed to understand the similarities and differences in the events, narratives and female experiences of the massacre.

Chapter Division

Chapter 1: Introduction

The introduction places Dalits within the historical context of the caste system and its practices. The socio-cultural marginalization and caste-based spatial segregation of the Dalits are highlighted through a literature review of the existing Dalit scholarship on caste and space. The causes of Dalit violence are identified from 1) Dalit activism, 2) Dalit literature, and 3) Dalit theory. Dalit atrocities and massacres are then explored to highlight gaps in legal and theoretical frameworks for Dalit massacres and its female survivors. The chapter likewise describes the gaps in understanding the relations among space, caste and gender in Dalit massacres followed by the research gaps, questions and objectives of the study. This chapter further proposes and outlines a mixed methodology that is a combination of feminist geocriticism

and digital cartography to understand the fictional and historical female survivors of the Kilvenmani Massacre (1968) and the Marichjhapi Massacre (1979). The methodology is a combination of geocritical approaches of Westphal (2007) and Tally (2008), digital cartography, feminist geographic information science (Kwan 2002a and 2002b; Pavlovskaya 2009; McLafferty 2002), feminist geography (Nelson and Seager, 2008; Hanson 1984) and feminist geocriticism (Wells 2017; Wrede 2015). The methodology and steps, relevance of the study, and ethical considerations are then explained. The chapter concludes with a reference to the open-access spatial archive of the survivors. and a brief summary of the chapters.

Chapter 2: Gendered Spaces of Caste: Case Study I – the Kilvenmani Massacre (1968)

This chapter presents the first case study – the Kilvenmani massacre (1968), to understand the space, caste and gender relations of Dalit massacres. The fictional and historical portrayals of female survivors are analysed using feminist geocriticism and digital cartography. The chapter begins with an introduction to the background of the massacre with the events categorised as occurring before, during and after the massacre. The causal factors are classified as economic, political and cultural with a subsequent review of the academic scholarship on the massacre to highlight the gaps in understanding the Dalit female experiences of the massacre. The chapter argues by scrutinizing English fictional and non-fictional texts for a polycentric, multifocal, feminist geocentric and digital cartographic approach that considers space as an intersectional factor influencing the gendered experiences of the female survivors. *Kuruthipunal/The River of Blood/Chorapuzha* (1978), *The Gypsy Goddess* (2014) and *Heat* (2019) and Tamil films like *Kann Sivanthal Mann Sivakum* (When Eyes Turn Red, the Soil Will Too, 1983), *Aravindhan* (1997), *Virumaandi* (2004), and *Asuran* (Demon) (2019) are the fictional narratives studied. The non-fictional narratives include the essay collection *Haunted by Fire: Essays on Caste, Class, Exploitation and Emancipation* (2016), the documentary

Ramayyahvin Kudisai (The Ramayya's Hut, 2005) and English online newspaper reports on the massacre (up to 2021).

Database of the female survivors – fictional and historical representations, authors, and feminist activists are created through manual geoparsing and later digitally mapped using tools like QGIS and ArcGIS Online after geocoding the data. Feminist geocriticism is utilised for theoretical and qualitative analysis and digital cartography for the quantitative and visual analysis of spatial data. The results and discussions are divided into three major sections. The first section identifies fictional and non-fictional survivors in their social and physical spaces through close readings. The gendered identities, roles, power dynamics of female survivors, and references to the massacre are examined in relation to caste and space in the narratives. The next section thematically compares the experiences of the fictional and historical survivors. The use of real and fictional settings and the creation of 'gendered spaces of caste' are analysed to understand the intersections of space, caste and gender in Dalit massacres. The final section explores additional literature, such as land laws, court orders, letters, and petitions, along with the space, caste, and gender of authors, feminist activists, and organizations, to deepen understanding of gendered experiences through feminist geocritical lens of multifocality.

The chapter confirms the hypothesis of the thesis about the existence of a relation among caste, gender and spatial location in Dalit massacres and concludes with the following inferences: 1) the caste identity of being a Dalit, determines the spatial location of the female survivors which in turn render them more susceptible to gender and caste-based violence during the massacres, 2) the female experiences of the massacre – real, fiction, upper caste and lower caste are marked by a 'politics of difference' and the survivors are still awaiting legal justice, 3) mappings reveal the existence of gendered spatial hierarchy or the creation of gendered spaces of caste due to spatial segregation in Tamil Nadu and 4) lack of Dalit feminist narratives of the massacre

calls for *Dalit feminitude*, a new political movement and analytical device that uses a combination of lived experience and allyship to advance Dalit feminist anti-caste movements and activism. The chapter ends by offering ways to eliminate caste-based spatial segregation in Indian villages and thereby Dalit massacres, via alterations in social and political spaces and institutional frameworks.

Chapter 3: Fictional and Factual Echoes of Space, Caste and Gender: Case Study II – the Marichjhapi Massacre (1979)

This chapter on the second case study – the Marichjhapi massacre (1979) follows a structure similar to the previous one, with an introduction to the events occurring before, during and after the massacre; economic, political, ecological and cultural causal factors and a detailed review of the academic scholarship on the massacre. The chapter reiterates the gaps in massacre studies, especially in terms of female fictional and non-fictional representations. It further grounds and supports the hypothesis on the relations among space, caste and gender in Dalit massacres by investigating English fictional and non-fictional texts on the massacre. Fictional texts considered are *The Hungry Tide* (2011) and the semi-fictional documentary photography *Where the Birds Never Sing* (2020). Non-fictional texts include the Oral History *Blood Island* (2019), *Interrogating my Chandal Life – An Autobiography of a Dalit* (2018), *Chap 6: Reconstructing Marichjhapi: From Margins and Memories of Migrant Lives* (2015) and English online newspaper articles (up to the year 2020).

Database on the real and fictional survivors, the camp locations and movement of the refugees and the location of the prominent writers on the massacre are assembled via manual scraping and digitally mapped. The results and discussions of the qualitative feminist geocritical reading and quantitative digital cartographical analysis are presented in three main sections. The first section close reads the settings, female experiences and references to the massacre in the selected fictional and non-fictional texts through the lens of feminist geocriticism and digital

cartography. The second section gives a thematic comparative analysis of the portrayal of the fictional and non-fictional survivors along with the creation of binary spaces like gendered spaces of caste and refugee camps as Dalit spaces. Additional literature such as court orders, letters and petitions along with the space, caste, and gender of authors are analysed in the next section to further ground the female experiences of the massacre.

The chapter validates the thesis hypothesis, demonstrating a significant relationship among space, caste and gender in Dalit massacres. The following inferences, drawn from the case study, align with the conclusions presented in the previous chapter: the caste identity, gender and spatial location are interconnected; the Dalit female experiences of the massacre are marked by a 'politics of difference' and they bear the 'triple burden' of caste, class, and gender; the creation of gendered spatial hierarchy or the creation of gendered spaces of caste due to spatial segregation of the Dalit refugees; and the need for a *Dalit feminitude*. The chapter concludes by reiterating the ways to eliminate caste-based spatial segregation in India to prevent large-scale caste-based, and gender-based violence against the Dalits.

Chapter 4: Space, Gender, and Caste: A Comparative Approach to the Kilvenmani and Marichjhapi Massacres Using Feminist Geocriticism and Digital Cartography

This chapter offers a comparative analysis of the fictional and non-fictional female survivors of the Kilvenmani massacre and the Marichjhapi massacre primarily using feminist geocriticism and digital cartography. The fictional and non-fictional sources mentioned in chapter 2 and 3 are compared to understand: 1) the similarities and differences in the female experiences before, during, and after the massacres and 2) the underlying intersections of space, caste, and gender in Dalit massacres. The chapter is divided into three main sections. The first section addresses the gaps in comparative studies of female experiences of two Dalit massacres and underscores the

importance of this research. This section proposes a comparative analysis grounded in literary, historical, and cultural comparative theoretical frameworks alongside the primary frameworks of feminist geocriticism and digital cartography. This methodology helps in: understanding the narrative techniques and styles used to represent Dalit massacres, to identify the patterns, mechanisms and dynamics behind complex processes and events (Helder 2015 61) like Dalit massacres and to devise methods and policies to prevent it.

The literary comparative methods utilized, in addition to feminist geocriticism, are cross-fictionality, and intertextuality. Historical comparison is done through Comparative Historical Analysis (CHA) rooted in causal analysis, analysis of processes that unfold progressively over time and contextualised comparisons of in-depth case studies. Comparative cultural studies are the convergence of comparative literature and cultural studies (Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek 1999) and decodes the representation of cultural identities, like caste, in literary works. To summarise, literary approaches are utilised to understand the fictional and non-fictional narratives whereas historical method facilitate an understanding of the sequence of events before, during, and after the massacre. Comparative cultural approach helps to comprehend the role of cultural institutions and practices like caste discrimination and socio-spatial stratification in Dalit massacres.

The next section compares the sequential events of the two massacres using CHA and comparative cultural analysis. The location of the massacres, causal and cultural factors, and politics of remembrances are contextualised and compared to deduce the impact of caste-based discrimination and spatial segregation in the assertion of Dalit identity and rights, and how this ultimately contributes to massacres. The final section presents the literary and cultural thematic comparisons of the narratives on the Kilvenmani massacre and the Marichjhapi massacre. Female fictional and historical representations, settings, gendered spaces of caste, gender-based violence and additional literature are thematically compared using feminist geocriticism and digital

cartography. The narratives are compared using literary theories and techniques like Dalit feminism, use of myths, authorial style, cross-fictionality and intertextuality. The chapter concludes with the major findings mainly focusing on the similarities and differences in two main aspects: 1). Gender and caste and 2) Space and caste. This chapter contributes to the current Dalit scholarship in India by proposing and applying a methodology to compare the female experiences of two (or more) Dalit massacres in India, using comparative literary, historical and cultural frameworks and aims to initiate research discussions on other lesser-known similar events in independent India.

Chapter 5: Possibilities and Tensions in Creating a Spatial Archive of the Female Survivors of Dalit Massacres in India: "Cartographies of Courage: Fictional Threads, Real Lives"

This chapter outlines the possibilities and tensions in creating a spatial archive of the female survivors of Dalit massacres in India using the example of the project *Cartographies of Courage: Fictional Threads, Real Lives* project. This open-access spatial archive is a work in progress and currently maps the fictional and non-fictional survivors of the Kilvenmani massacre and the Marichjhapi massacre. The initial section of the chapter defines and establishes geo-spatial archives in digital humanities before proceeding to the spatial archive that is created as part of this thesis. The next section gives the background to the project – its aims, open accessibility, the different sections like data and ethics, educational resources, reproducibility and analytical study of the Kilvenmani and the Marichjhapi massacres. The methodology used for the creation of the spatial archive including the creation of spatial hypertexts is detailed in the next section. The results and discussion section gives the possibilities and tensions in creating an Indian feminist geospatial archive in DH. The chapter concludes by highlighting the major findings and conclusions, limitations of the spatial archive and future work. This chapter proposes a methodology for the creation of Indian feminist geospatial projects by outlining the

possibilities and tensions encountered during the creation of an open-access spatial archive of female survivors of Dalit massacres in India. The chapter contributes to the current DH and literary scholarship in the sub-continent by offering innovative ways for sharing research that engage both academic communities and the general public.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

The concluding chapter summarises and reflects upon the analysis carried out in the four major chapters of the thesis. It briefly summarises the main research findings of the thesis and discusses its limitations and future scopes. The first section of this chapter proposes a legal and theoretical framework for understanding Dalit massacres in India and highlights the contributions of the thesis. This research contributes to the current Dalit scholarship in India by proposing comparative, legal, theoretical and pedagogical frameworks for understanding female experiences of Dalit massacres in India. The study contributes to the digital humanities endeavours in India by developing an unprecedented open-access spatial archive that can serve as a prototype for future Indian feminist geospatial humanities projects.

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Fellowships and Awards

1. CLS INFRA TNA fellowship, round 4 for the project "Seeing the Unseen: Locating the Women of Independent India's Unheard Dalit Massacres". Host Institution: LINHD (Laboratory of Innovation in Digital Humanities) at UNED (National University of Distance Education), Madrid, Spain, March 6-May 8, 2024.

2. IIT Indore Best Research Paper Award in Humanities and Social Sciences 2024 for "Digital Cartography and Feminist Geocriticism: A Case Study of Marichjhapi Massacre". Cartographica: University of Toronto Press, (UTP), Vol. 58 Issue 3, pp. 95-115, September 2023. DOI: https://doi.org/10.3138/cart-2022-0022.

3. HASTAC Scholar for the 2023-2025 session - HASTAC Scholars Fellowship Program.

Presentations at National and International Conferences/Seminars

1. Presented, the paper "Digital Cartography and Feminist Geocriticism: A Case Study of Marichjhapi Massacre" at UNED-LINHD TNA Mini Conference as part of CLS INFRA TNA Fellowship. On 24 April, 2024, 10.30-11.00am CEST.

2. Presented, the paper "Using Digital Cartography and Feminist Geocriticism in Literature: Locating the Women of Kilvenmani Massacre (1968)" at UNED-LINHD Spring 2024 Seminar Series as an Exchange researcher of the CLS INFRA project of the European infrastructure DARIAH.EU. On 17April 2024.

3. Presented, the paper entitled "Digital Cartography and Feminist Geocriticism: A Case Study of the Marichjhapi Massacre" at HASTAC Scholars' Digital Friday: A Tapestry of Digital Narratives on 12 April, 2024.

4. Presented, the paper entitled "Indian Intersectional Ecofeminism and Sustainability: A Study on Mayilamma: The Life of a Tribal Eco-Warrior and Jharkhand's Save the Forest Movement" at the SPARC conference on "Navigating Sustainable Futures" hosted in hybrid mode by the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, IIT Patna and School of Liberal Arts, Bennett University (Greater Noida) in association with the University of Toronto (Canada), University of Northampton (UK), Aarhus University (Denmark), and University of York (UK) from 24th-25th February 2024.

5. Presented, the paper entitled, "Reproducibility of Indian DH Projects: A Case Study" at "The Digital Orientalist's Virtual Conference 2023

on 'Sustainability in the DH'" organised by The Digital Orientalist, 3 June, 2023.

6. Presented the paper entitled "Seeing the Unseen: Where are the Women of Independent India's Unheard Dalit Massacres?" at the SHSS Research Symposium 2023, organised by IIT Indore, India, on 7 January, 2023.

7. Presented, the paper entitled, "Digital Place Making: A Feminist Geocritical Reading of Marichjhapi Massacre (India) through Digital Cartography" at "The 4th Spatial Humanities 2022 Conference" organised by Ghent Centre for Digital Humanities, Quetelet Centre for Quantitative Historical Research and Antwerp Cultural Heritage Sciences in collaboration with the Lancaster University Digital Humanities Centre and Digital Humanities Lab, Universidade NOVA de Lisboa, 7th - 9th September, 2022.

8. Presented, the paper entitled, "Cartographies of Caste and Gender in Dalit Massacres: A Proposal for Feminist Geocritical and Digital Cartographical Method " at "Virtual Feminist Digital Methods Conference" organised by the Centre for Feminist Research, York University, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, 11-13 August, 2022.

9. Presented the paper entitled "Digital Labour in the Field of Digital Humanities in India – An Enquiry" by Apsara Bala[1] and Jyothi Justin[2] at the DHARTI 2022 Conference on 24 Feb, 2022 as part of the panel "Digital Labour and Data Justice in Indian Academia" on the conference theme The Digital Divides: Discontents, Debates and Discussions, 21-25 Feb., 2022.

10. Presented the paper entitled, "Digital Cartography and Feminist Geocriticism in Literary Studies - A Proposal" at the 5th ACM SIGSPATIAL International Workshop on Geospatial Humanities held in conjunction with ACM SIGSPATIAL 2021 in Beijing, China (Virtual via zoom).

11. Presented a paper entitled, "Decolonizing the Hanging Rocks: A Geocritical Approach to Joan Lindsay's Picnic at Hanging Rock and its Visual Adaptations" at the Virtual International Conference, "Who Started the Bushfires?": Australian Culture, Economy and Polity in the Post-Truth Era organized by the Postgraduate and Research Department of English, University College, Thiruvananthapuram, India and Centre for Australian Studies, University of Kerala, Littcrit and IASA (Indian Association for the Study of Australia), 15 September, 2021.

Workshops/Others

1. Offered a workshop on QGIS entitled "Text to Map: QGIS for Digital Humanities Workshop" at DHARTI 2024 biennial conference themed 'Digital Subject/ivities in the Global South' hosted at Indian Institute of Technology, Jodhpur (IIT-J) on December 11, 2024 together with Dr Shanmugapriya, Barkha Rani Lakra and Simran Bhimjyani.

2. Part of the membership committee for DHARTI 2024 biennial conference themed 'Digital Subject/ivities in the Global South' hosted at Indian Institute of Technology, Jodhpur (IIT-J) on December 10-13, 2024.

3. Part of the program committee of Spatial Humanities 2024 Conference, organized by the Bamberg University, Centre for Heritage Conservation Studies and Technologies (KDWT), Ghent Centre for Digital Humanities, Lancaster University Centre for Digital Humanities, Digital Humanities Lab, Universidade NOVA de Lisboa, Northumbria University Architecture & Built Environment and the Urban Meta Mapping consortium. https://spathum.uni-bamberg.de/organization.html

4. Part of the project on developing Digital Humanities undergraduate course for Netaji Subhas Open University (NSOU), Kolkata. 2023.

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ACRONYMS

API	Application Programming Interface
BC	Backward Castes
BSP	Bahujan Samaj Party
CPI(M)	Communist Party of India (Marxist)
.csv	Comma Separated Values
DH	Digital Humanities
IIM	Indian Institute of Management
IIT	Indian Institute of Technology
IITI	Indian Institute of Technology Indore
LAFTI	Land for Tillers' Freedom
NFDW	National Federation of Dalit Women
OBC	Other Backward Classes
OSM	Open Street Maps
PPA	Paddy Producer's Association
PoA Act	Prevention of Atrocities Act
QGIS	Quantum Geographic Information System
SC	Scheduled Castes
SDK	Software Development Kit
SNDP	Sri Narayana Dharma Paripalana
ST	Scheduled Tribes

Chapter 1

Introduction

A just society is that society in which ascending sense of reverence and descending sense of contempt is dissolved into the creation of a compassionate society.

- *Dr B.R. Ambedkar, Annihilation of Caste.*

The chapter begins by locating the socio-cultural and political location of Dalits within the caste practices in India including the Dalit scholarship on caste-based spatial segregation. It then explores the underlying causes of Dalit massacres by examining how the rise of Dalit activism, literature, and theory empowered Dalits to assert their rights and protest against the discriminatory practices of the caste system. The role of women in activism, literature, and theory, and how their contributions have been marginalized in history, is also explored in detail followed by the definition and differentiation between Dalit atrocities and massacres. The causal factors, perpetrators, repercussions and prevention strategies of atrocities and massacres are analysed together with an introduction to existing legal and theoretical frameworks on both phenomena. The space, caste, and gender relations in Dalit massacres is then analysed before proceeding to the background, methodology, and the need for this study on the female survivors of selected Dalit massacres in India.

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

The term "Dalit", used for all genders, is derived from the Sanskrit root 'dal-', meaning "broken, ground-down, downtrodden, or oppressed" (V. A. 2015). It refers to the existential conditions of Dalits and their experiences of social, economic, political, and cultural oppression. Dalit includes those termed in the Colonial India Act of

1935 or the Government of India Act (Article 341) as Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs) and Other Backward Classes (OBCs) (Malik 2014). The act considers Dalits as Scheduled Castes (SCs) and *Adivasis* (the tribal/indigenous people) as Scheduled Tribes (STs) respectively (Teltumbde 2010, p. 15). "The term Dalit [today] is an act of rebellion used by the former untouchables to acquire a new identity, which stands for pride and self-respect" (Kumar 2019, p. 12). *Ati-shudras*, *chandals*, *panchamas*, *antyajas*, *acchuts*, *asprushyas*, Depressed Classes, *Harijans* and SCs are some of the terms variously used to refer to the Dalits throughout the history of India (Kumar 2019, p. 2). As a standard practice, the term Dalit refers to SCs and has a positive connotation (Malik 2014). In this thesis, 'Dalit' or lower caste is employed to describe the categories of individuals outlined in the Colonial India Act of 1935.

"Dalits have been victimised through the structural hierarchy of caste that perpetuates the ethos of inequality and maintains the segregation of power" (Patil 2013, p. 214). It is a set of caste-based rules written by Manu in *Manushastra* or *Manusmriti*, upheld as the basis of caste system and contains "a number of inhuman and unethical laws against the *shudras* in the name of religion" (Kumar 2019, p.20). Consequently, to understand the concept of 'Dalitness' or Dalit identity it is important to understand the caste system that is still prevalent in India. The word 'caste' (Spanish *casta* meaning 'race' and Latin *castus*) in Portuguese means 'pure' or 'chaste'. 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).

He notes that caste in India has now spread to the practices within Islam, Christianity, Buddhism and Sikhism (16). Ghurye (1969) identifies the six major features of the caste system as: segmental division of society, hierarchy, restrictions on social interrelations, civil and religious disabilities and privileges, restricted choice of occupations and restrictions on marriage (2-28). Women did not find any separate category in the varna system and the *Shudra* women were always discarded (Sarvesh et al. 2021, p. 95). *Adivasis* (the tribal/indigenous people) and Dalits (as untouchables or unseeable) were also excluded from the caste system (12) and later added as a fifth *varna* called 'untouchables' (Chakravarti 2018, p. 9) or *acchoots* (Jodhka 2013, p. 2). Untouchability is an integral part of the caste system (Jodhka 2013, p. xi) in which people are categorised as 'pure' or 'polluted' based on their position in the caste hierarchy. Caste, according to Muthukkaruppan (2017), is "not a thing but a relationship [and] violence is the ideological kernel of caste" (49). Caste itself results in violence and untouchability is a form of its violent manifestations (60).

"*Jati* refers to an endogamous unit within which one must marry; members of a *jati* are members of a descent group, . . . with its own cultural traditions. . ." (Chakravarti 2018, p. 9). *Jatis* have a regional character in contrast to *varna* that is observed throughout the country (Jodhka 2013, p. 9). The three major divisions based on *jati* are the upper-castes, the middle castes (non-polluting) and the lower castes (polluting, untouchables) (Chakravarti 2018, p. 9). In this study we use the broader classification encompassing only upper and lower caste. After examining the position of Dalits within the caste system in

India, the next section focuses on caste-based spatial segregation, particularly in rural areas.

1.1.1 Territory of Oppression: Caste, Spatial Segregation, and Struggle

Dalits constitute sixteen percent (more than about 220 million) (Prasad et al. 2020, p. 10) of the country's population and they are distributed throughout India, with some populations in other parts of South Asia like – Pakisthan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Myanmar. Dalits live segregated from the main population (who are within the caste system), often on the outskirts of villages and are assigned subhuman tasks like collection and removal of human and animal waste, butchery and attending funeral pyres among others. Dalits were (and still are in some places) prohibited from entering sacred places like religious and educational sites and have restricted access to public facilities such as wells, rivers, roads, schools, and markets (Kumar 2019, p. 21). This socio-spatial segregation of Dalits or 'spatial inequality' and hierarchical access to societal and natural resources (Patel 2022) is based on the caste system and its concepts of purity/pollution and untouchability. "Dalits are discriminated against, denied access to land, forced to work in degrading conditions, and routinely abused at the hands of the higher caste and police, who enjoy state protection (Human Rights Watch Asia 1999, p. 2). Also, traditional customs and laws prohibits Dalits from purchasing land and deny them the right to acquire property (Patel 2022).

The caste-based spatial segregation in villages where the "'[un]touchables' may not cross the line dividing their part of the village from that occupied by the higher-castes" (Human Rights Watch Asia 1999, p. 2), facilitates discriminatory practices. "A dalit cannot rent a house in a non-dalit neighbourhood" says Teltumbde 2010 (17). Spate (1952) refers to this extreme caste segregation prevalent in south

Indian villages, that forcefully situates Dalit inhabitation away from the main village, as "geographical differentiation apartheid" (148-49). Ambedkar suggests that such spatial segregation results in the creation of 'spatial hierarchy' (Patel 2022). This in turn forces the Dalit colonies to be on the outskirts, deprived of even common resources like drinking water. An example of this could be found in the restrictions imposed upon the Dalits in using the village common well, usually the only source of water for the entire village, based on the notions of untouchability. This practice still exists in its modern versions where the Dalits are not allowed to touch water tankers at the time of drought (Indo-Asian News Service 2019). The water issue is more pressing especially for the Dalit women as they are the ones who are responsible to fulfil the basic requirements of a Dalit household (Dutta 2018).

Dalit studies scholars (expanded later) have explored the relation between space and caste, as "disputes over status and challenges to caste hegemony have often been articulated through practices that questioned the cartography of caste" (Gorringe 2016, p. 2). "In a caste context, the *cheri* (Tamil for 'slum'), government constructed colony or urban estate serve to identify and marginalize Dalits" (Gorringe 2016, p.3). The spatial orientation of Dalits into *cheris*, colonies or ghettos (Ambedkar 1935), or *poorvas, pattis, wadas, aans* and *tolas* (Patel 2022) due to caste-based socio-spatial segregation render them further susceptible to mass violence, especially to massacres using arson. The spatial segregation of Dalits and absolute control of space which are intrinsic to the caste system, is also used as a means to control their physical and social mobility (Mohan 2016) which in turn shapes Dalit experiences in secluded *cheris* or ghettos (Rawat 2013).

Guru, a proponent of using Dalit lived experiences to theorize about Dalits, asserts the importance of understanding the social position of Dalit in order to evaluate the physical spaces that they inhabit (Sarukkai 2007). Guru (2017) has theorized on caste experience and space where he suggests that segregated spaces or spatial contexts can be transferred by new lived experiences. Guru (2017) says,

> The tension between the old and the new [spaces] suggests that the old spaces normally put up stubborn resistance to the new concepts. The dynamic nature of space therefore suggests the normative limits of the static spaces and it also offers the theoretical promise to develop a new vocabulary of emancipation. Therefore, it is the reconfiguration of old spaces affected by the force of reason normally brought from outside that engenders this new language (78-79).

Ambedkar saw untouchability, a practice against the basic dignity of Dalits, as "a case of territorial segregation" (Rao 2009, p. 126) that results in the creation of isolated ghettos (Ambedkar 1935). "He observed that social segregation and spatial fragmentation are the distinctive features of Hindu villages, making them sites of inequality and injustice" (cited in Patel 2022). According to Ambedkar (2014), the Indian village consists of castes where the population is divided into two sections —

> (I) Touchables and (ii) Untouchables. II. The Touchables form the major community and the Untouchables a minor community. III. The Touchables live inside the village and the Untouchables live outside the village in separate quarters. IV. Economically, the Touchables form a strong and powerful community, while the Untouchables are a poor and a dependent community. V. Socially, the Touchables occupy the position of a ruling race, while the Untouchables occupy the position of a subject race of

hereditary bondsmen (20).

Ambedkar's views on the interrelations between caste and space, suggests that space should be considered as an intersectional category while attempting to understand Dalit identity and experiences. Dalits are now seizing every available opportunity to dismantle such casteist spatial practices that restricts their socio-cultural experiences. Better economic opportunity coupled with the hope to escape caste rigidity have increased the migration of Dalits to urban spaces (Bob, 2007). Dalits, especially in Tamil Nadu, are now moving out of casteist villages and are in the process of reclaiming and creating caste-free public spaces that are accessible to people irrespective of their caste background (Gorringe 2016).

Caste in India is thus inextricably linked to space – the geographical, socio-political and religious spaces among others – which leads to concerns about the spatiality of caste or creation of physical 'casted land' (Fuchs 2020). The spatiality of caste also becomes relevant while studying Dalit massacres. However, the theoretical constructions that connect space and caste are not yet applied to Dalit massacres, considering the overall lack of studies on Dalit massacres (as expanded later). The interconnections between the spatial location and the caste identity of individuals in Dalit massacres, also lead to the dire need to analyze the contribution of other intersectional factors like gender, class, ability, and others, to the violence against Dalits. Dalit women, for instance "suffer from the 'triple burden' of gender bias, caste discrimination, and economic deprivation" (Sabharwal 2015, p. 1) which is elevated during massacres. This in turn leads to the major question of this study "Where are the women of independent India's Dalit Massacres?" But before delving into this main research question, it is necessary to understand the social, cultural and political context that lead to Dalit atrocities and massacres in India.

This study situates the broader discourse on violence against Dalits and Dalit massacres around three main aspects namely, 1) Dalit activism, 2) Dalit literature and criticism, and finally 3) Dalit theory including Dalit feminist theory.

1.1.2 Dalit Activism and Women in Dalit Activism

Dalit activism manifests through socio-political movements aimed at opposing caste discrimination and social injustice, by using various mediums such as protests, creative works (literature), and in the more recent times digital or online activism. Dalit movements have emphasised the significance of educating Dalits and politically organising the lower-castes at a grass-roots level. Shah (2004) divides the social movements in India as reformative movement (reform the society within existing social rules) and alternative movements (devise an alternative social system to reform the society) (119). Dalit activistic movements are alternative movements that aim to reform the society by eliminating existing caste practices. The earliest form of such Dalit anticaste movement according to Teltumbde 2010 is the rejection of the theory of superiority of the Aryan race and the assertion of Dalit aboriginal identity (23). The state of Maharashtra is the pioneer of the Dalit movement and literature with Jotibarao Phule being a prominent Dalit leader and activist who is believed to have coined the term Dalit (Kumar 2019, p. 3-4). Phule believed in reformative movements by educating the oppressed classes to raise caste consciousness and promoted education of girl children of the 'untouchables' while also promoting "an ethic-based monotheistic religion" (Kumar 2019, p. 32).

Non-brahmin movement of the 1800 and 1900s by Jotibarao Phule in Bombay (Samaj movement) and by Periyar E. V. Ramasamy Naicker in Madras (*Suyamariathai Iyyakkam* or self-respect movement) are the earliest forms of organised activism of the *shudra*

caste (lowest in the varna system after *brahmins* or priests, *kshatriyas* or warriors and *vaishyas* or traders), against the caste system (Teltumbde 2010, p. 22). Until this movement, the reform movements in India were mostly led by the upper-caste men – beginning with Raja Rammohan Roy till Gandhi (Kumar 2019, p. 31). Sri Narayana Guru and Ambedkar are the other prominent figures of this movement (Kumar 2019, p. 31). Some of the other prominent pre-independent anti-caste movements identified by Lakum (2022, p. 141-42) are: the Adi-Dharm movement in Punjab, the Adi-Hindu movement in Uttar Pradesh, the Namasudras movement in Bengal, Sri Narayana Gurus movement in Kerala, Adi-Andhra movement in coastal Andhra, Adi-Hindu movement in Hyderabad, the Dalit assertions in Mysore and Bihar and the Dalit Panther movement in Maharashtra.

Periyar E. V. Ramasamy Naicker and his 'self-respect movement' (Madras, 1925) created Dravidian consciousness in Tamil Nadu to defend the rights of the Dravidians against the Aryan domination (Lakum 2022, p. 142). He was also a proponent of equal rights (including property rights) for women and Dalit women education. Sri Narayana Guru (1855-1928), on the other hand, pioneered anti-caste movement in Kerala by founding the SNDP (Sri Narayana Dharma Paripalana) movement in Kerala. His teachings grounded in Vedas and Vedanta played a significant role in raising class consciousness among the coir workers who belonged to the Ezhava caste (Meera 1983, p. 48). The SNDP movement (movement for the propagation of the philosophy of Sri Narayana Guru Swamy) gave rise to a new value system that led to the coir workers and women's participation in the 1930s trade union movement (Meera 1983, p. 47-48). Thus, he promoted education and employment of the lower-castes in Kerala.

9

Dr B. R. Ambedkar (1935) known as the architect of Indian constitution, is a significant anti-caste intellectual who motivated Dalits to organise and agitate against casteist exploitation. He worked for Dalit access to basic needs such as drinking water (Mahad Satyagraha of 1927) and also championed the cause for Dalit access to education. He popularised the use of the term 'Dalit' ('broken men') and believed inter-marriage and annihilation of caste as a solution to dissolve the caste system. Ambedkar is known for his criticism of Gandhi as the latter believed in the caste system and defended it "as a framework for the division of labour" (Kumar 2019, p. 30). He saw embracing Buddhism as a means to assert Dalit identity outside of the exploitative caste system (Kumar 2019, p. 5).

> The irony is that their caste positions still persist even after the change of religion. Hence, terms such as 'Dalit Muslims', 'Dalit Christians', 'Dalit Sikhs' and 'Dalit Buddhists' have come into use. To break this monopoly of caste across religions, social and political activism are working hard to bring about a collective consciousness, which has been termed 'Dalitbahujan' by Kancha Ilaiah. . . Iliah believes that this kind of unity among oppressed communities will bring about social revolution which will give birth to a new social order (Kumar 2019, p. 9).

In his work, *Why I am Not a Hindu?*, Iliah (2005) terms the transfer of power from the upper caste to the lower caste in this new social order as 'Dalitization'.

In addition to the anti-caste movements focused on the cultural upliftment of Dalits, there were also class struggles, as Dalits were primarily laborers within the traditional caste system. The rising discontent among the Dalits over issues of low wages and inhuman working conditions enabled the Communist Party of India (CPI) to organise the labourers against the upper-caste landowners. Communist

class struggles that empowered the Dalit labourers to fight for their rights also led to caste-atrocities as in the case of the Kilvenmani massacre of 1968 (Teltumbde 2010, p. 60) where class struggle eventually manifested itself in terms of caste. Teltumbde (2010) identifies the rise of the Dalit Panthers in Maharashtra in 1972, as a response to the increase in the number of caste atrocities in post-independence rural India (60). The movement was launched by Dalit activists and writers like J. V. Pawar, Namdeo Dhasal and Raja Dhale among others (Kumar 2019, p. 5). Dalits according to the Panthers, consisted of people from different "caste, class, ethnicity, gender and minority communities across religions who are naturally opposed to Hindu upper caste/class men" (Kumar 2019, p. 6). The Panthers attempted to protest against casteist social injustice on the oppressed classes mainly by propagating their ideas through original literature such as poems, stories and plays among others (Shah 2004).

Dalit activism led to political action as after independence Dalits formed political parties in an effort to claim their rights in an organised manner. One example is that of Kanshi Ram's Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), which was able to gain power under the ministership of Mayawati, a Dalit woman (Bob 2007, p. 173). However, "there is no single political leadership of this vast and diverse group [Dalits] across India" (173) that has proved to be successful in protecting the rights of Dalits. Malik (2019) outlines the challenges faced by the contemporary Dalit movements in India. During elections, Dalits who are part of the movement are arrested on fake cases framed by the government and ruling caste as a means to suffocate their struggles (130). Also, most Dalit leaders after Ambedkar are attempting to mimic his ideals thereby leading to a leadership crisis and lack of coherence for the contemporary Dalit movements that hinders the creation of a pan-Indian Dalit identity (130). He suggests to "organise and mobilise all Dalit-marginalised

people under a single pan-Indian Dalit identity . . . The main task of Dalit movement is to bring about social change by putting pressure on the state to fulfil its Constitutional obligations" (130).

Dalit movements in India have effectively fostered a new Dalit consciousness, emphasizing cultural and political unity in opposition to caste-based discrimination. This has been achieved through various mediums, ranging from public protests and literature to digital platforms such as social media (Prasad et al. 2020, p. 8). Nonetheless, considerable challenges remain, such as ongoing violence against Dalits, socio-economic hurdles, and insufficient legal frameworks that restrict their complete integration into society. Dalit activism also gave rise to associated movements like Dalit women's movement which caters to intersectional issues of caste and gender intersections in Indian society.

Role of Women in Dalit Activism

Dalit women's movements explore the intersectional relations among caste, class and gender while emphasizing the importance of grassroot organisation and education of Dalit women of rural India. It focuses on gender equality, rights, dignity, and economic enablement as an integral part of the Dalit struggle for social justice. Urmila Pawar and Meenakshi Moon (1989) have written extensively on the women's participation in the Ambedkarite movement against untouchability. Their research on testimonies highlighted the missing voices of Dalit female activists in archival materials and the need to look into archival silences (Sarvesh et al. 2021, p. 99). Rege (2006) sees their work as challenging the overarching male identity that is generally attributed to the Dalit movements in India. Sarvesh et al. (2021) on the other hand highlights the absence of Dalit women labourers' narratives in the early trade union movements.

Teltumbde (2010) sheds light on the involvement of women since the beginning of Dalit movements as they "have taken vanguard positions whenever the struggle has demanded militancy, without waiting for the acceptance, approval or acknowledgement of men" (121). Dalit women writings (literature and feminist theory) which are dealt in detail in the upcoming section on Dalit feminist literature also played a significant role in women's activism. Rise of Dalit feminist organisations facilitated public demonstrations and protests whereas literature was mostly used as a medium to establish the differences in Dalit feminist subjectivity (caste and gender) from the then prevalent patriarchal depictions. Dalits women's federation of 1990's is an example of activism along with the National Federation of Dalit Women (NFDW, 1995), founded by Dalit activist Ruth Manorama, India Dalit Women's Forum (1996) and Dalit Christian women organisation (1997) (Sarvesh et al. 2021, p. 101). Most key figures of Dalit movement like Jotibarao Phule, Dr Ambedkar, Periyar, and Sri Narayana Guru advocated Dalit women's education and upliftment. Dalit feminist activism dates back to Savitribai Phule who was the first lower-caste woman to establish schools for the lower caste girls in order to promote literacy and self-respect among them (Sarvesh et al. 2021; Sisodia 2024). Contemporary activists like Meena Kandasamy writes about the caste and gender discrimination in print and digital platforms. Despite the support of prominent leaders and Dalit women activists in various spheres of the society, the unique problems and struggles of Dalit women have been ignored and historically neglected by the patriarchal narratives of Dalit movement and upper-caste led feminist movements (Paik 2018, p. 2). This drove Dalit women to launch movements asserting their intersectional identity and struggles.

Though Dalit women activists have succeeded in implementing some legal advocacy for social justice, they still have to fight through other challenges like socio-economic barriers, violence against Dalit

women, political empowerment and representation, and education of rural Dalit women. The recent movements therefore focus on eliminating gender and caste-based discrimination and violence on Dalit women; to counter economic disparities (especially in terms on wage discrimination); to bridge educational barriers; to provide legal aid and advocacy; and to highlight the caste and gender intersectional oppression of Dalit women. Even in the legal front Sarvesh et al. (2021) critiques that the laws on "Dalit women's property rights, longevity, education, and empowerment are largely androcentric, as the state's schemes and policies are majorly heteronormative and male centric" (91). This exclusion of Dalit woman's voice would not lead to full social justice (93). Therefore, Mallick (2019) observes the importance of incorporating Dalit women in activistic movement. "Women's role and leadership is seen negatively within the Dalit movement historically, and women's involvement and liberation politics are not prioritised. The future Dalit movement should take care of the women question along both the line of caste and class where women are the common victim" (Malik 2019, p. 129).

Upon reengaging with Dalit activism on a broader scale, the movements are mostly regionally organised based on linguistic or regional aspects (Maharashtra, Punjab, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal among others) and have hence failed to gain a national traction. This scenario is now witnessing changes with the latest forms of activism including Dalit feminist activism making use of digital platforms and hashtag campaigns (#dalitlivesmatter). While discussing the challenges faced by Dalit movements in India Malik (2019) asserts the need for a national united Dalit front and a pan-Indian Dalit identity or a "Bahujan Samaj with all marginalised sections including the minorities in its fold" (129). Dalit movements, both caste and gender based, in different parts of the country were able to bring broader social reforms but these movements and reforms were

often less cohesive which eventually led to the decline of the movement. By the 1960s, the Dalit movement was losing momentum, "a circumstance reflected in the increasing atrocities on Dalits in rural areas" (Teltumbde 2010, p. 27). Indian independence and the constitutional provision for equality and fundamental rights empowered the Dalits to assert their rights and challenge caste hierarchies which also led to an increase in atrocities against them (Chakravarti 2018, p. 13).

1.1.3 Dalit Literature and Feminist Criticism in Dialogue

Emergence of Dalit literature, influenced by the Dalit activists and Dalit movements gave a new dimension to the rising consciousness of Dalit subjectivity (Kumar 2019, p. 12) and self-reflexivity which empowered the writers to raise their voice against caste, class and gender discriminations. Dalit literature is traditionally utilised as a powerful tool to challenge the mainstream *savarna* representations of caste by asserting the Dalit experiences and identity. Dalit writings are "both stories and histories of Dalit communities which reflect a radicalisation in Dalit lives" (Kumar 2019, p. vii). Dalit writers have used literature since early 20th century as a means to preserve their self-respect, identity and heritage of their community (Monika 2024) and to protest against the caste-based social injustice meted out to them. Dalit writers mainly aim to foreground the first-hand lived experiences of Dalit identity/subjectivity under the traditional caste system which in turn render them poor and powerless.

Dalit literature predominantly comprises of Dalit autobiographies (which has become a genre of its own), poetry, short stories, memoirs and plays. *Baluta* by Dagdu Maruti Pawar, Urmila Pawar's *The Weave of my Life*, and Bama's *Karukku* (1992) are some well-known examples of Dalit autobiographies, where personal and intimate narratives are used to reveal the caste struggles of Dalits. Dalit

literature began with poetry and Dalit poets defiled the traditional style of poems by choosing simple words that do not adhere to rhymes and rhythms as seen in *Golpitha* by Namdeo Dhasal (Kumari and Kapoor 2021, p. 6). Dalit autobiographies and memoirs on the other hand are testimonial literature that narrates the first-hand experiences or phenomenology of being a Dalit in Indian society. "Dalit autobiographies had made a great contribution in Dalit writings, which made people to see the world from Dalit's point of view. Dalit autobiographies are known as narratives of pain as most of the writers had presented their pain through their autobiographies" (Prajapati and Surya 2022, p. 401). Dalit literature in itself therefore serves as a criticism of the mainstream representations of caste, class and gender.

Other forms of Dalit literature, especially fiction – short stories, novels and plays are relatively new as initially Dalit writers were mostly focused on realistic portrayal of their lived experiences, mostly on their culture, food, religion, philosophy, history, and gender (Kumari and Kapoor 2021). Graphic Dalit narratives (*A Gardener in the Wasteland* by Aparajita Ninan Srividya Natarajan) and oral history narratives (*Blood Island* by Deep Halder) are also emerging in the recent times. Dalit literature is available in different languages such as Marathi, Bangla, Hindi, Kannada, Punjabi, Sindhi, Odia, Malayalam and Tamil among others. English translations of the regional Dalit literature (like *Poisoned Bread: Translations from Modern Marathi Dalit Literature* and *An Anthology of Dalit Literature*) helped in popularising the works. *Gulamgiri* by Jotibarao Phule (1873) is considered as the initial text that started the Dalit literary movement in India. Some of the prominent Dalit writers are as Baburao Bagul, Sharankumar Limbale, Arun Kamble, Shantabai Kamble, Namdeo Dhasal, Daya Pawar, Urmila Pawar, Jatin Bala, Manoranjan Byapari and Bama. Modern Dalit literature (1960s onwards) has major contributions from Arjun Dangle, Mahasweta Devi, Poomani, Imayam,

Perumal Murugan, and D. Gopi among others. B.R. Ambedkar, Sree Narayana Guru, Jotibarao Phule, Ayyankali, Sahodaran Ayyappan, and Poykayil Appachan are some of the reformist thinkers who have extensively contributed to Dalit writings.

Dalit literature adheres to the theory of Dalit aesthetics which also serves as a criticism against the standardised rules of traditional Indian literature. Dalit aesthetics does take into consideration the mainstream Indian aesthetics that mostly imitates Sanskrit poetics of 'rasa' or 'art for art's sake'. Instead "Dalit aestheticism is 'art for life's sake' (Kumari and Kapoor 2021, p. 1). Limbale (2004) is known for his critique of the positioning of the traditional Indian aesthetic as the standard which he terms as "a sign of cultural dictatorship" (107). Dalit aesthetics advocates for "equality, liberty, justice and fraternity for the most depressed class in society" (Kumari and Kapoor 2021, p. 2). Dalit aesthetics allows the writers to use the spoken language of Dalits in their writings as opposed to the 'literary' language that is used in mainstream literature (Kumari and Kapoor 2021). Use of powerful imagery to depict the harsh realities of Dalit experiences is another feature of Dalit literature. "Dalit creativity, therefore, is a cry for freedom of a group of people who were earlier denied the right to articulate their voices. Dalit literature is, therefore, a literature of dignity" (Kumar 2019, p. 10). However, the rise of Dalit consciousness inspired the better positioned gender – Dalit men, to write about their subjectivity in which women were only seen as an extension of males (Sarvesh et al. 2021). The absence and misrepresentation of female Dalit voices later led the emergence of Dalit feminist literature.

Dalit Feminist Literature

Dalit feminist literature evolved as a response to the misrepresentation of caste and gender intersections in mainstream feminist, Dalit and non-Dalit patriarchal writings. Dalit women's

writings therefore foregrounded the concept of intersectionality (Crenshaw 1989) to underline the role of gender, caste and class intersections in shaping a Dalit woman's lived experiences. Dalit women across India used literature, mostly written in their mother tongue and later translated to English, as a medium to redefine and assert their intersectional identity. Baby Kamble, Urmila Pawar, Bama, and Shantabai Kamble, are some of the notable figures in Dalit feminist literature or Dalit women's literature. Besides the theme of Dalit female identity, they also explore themes of social and domestic violence, poverty, protest, resistance and resilience of the triply marginalised Dalit woman. They transform their trauma, both intergenerational and cultural trauma, into activism through literature (Singh 2023). Paik (2018) notes,

> [t]hey provide details not only of their plight, suppression, humiliation, dilemmas, and exploitation but also of their challenge to communitarian notions of a monolithic Dalit community; their social, economic, religious, and political deprivations; and their struggle and status in society (4).

Dalit women's writings express a rising solidarity and resistance against social injustice among them as seen in the works of Bama (*Sangati*) and Urmila Pawar (Motherwit) (Rahman 2023). Both individual and collective experiences of a caste community are explored in women's writing where the personal narratives are contextualised against a broader social scenario. Bama's autobiography, for example, sheds light on her experiences as a Dalit Christian and prompts important questions about the ongoing presence of caste identity within socio-cultural institutions, even after one has converted to a different religion. Besides Bama's *Karukku*, Urmila Pawar's *Aaydan* (*The Weave of My Life: A Dalit Woman's Memoirs* 2008), Baby Kamble's *The Prison We Broke*, Janabai Kachru Girhe's

Deathly Pains (1992), Shantabai Dhanaji Dani's *Ratrandin Amha* (*For Us – These Nights and Days*, 1990), Baby Kondiba Kamble's *Jinne Amuche* (*Our Lives*, 1986), and Kumud Pawade's *Antasphot* (*Thoughtful Outburst*, 1981) are some of the other notable Dalit women literature. Besides autobiographical writings including memoirs and testimonials, Dalit women have also recently started experimenting with fiction of which Meena Kandasamy is a prominent figure. Vijila Chirapadu (poet), Sukritharani (poet), P. Sivakami, Gogu Shyamala, Joopaka Subhadra (poet), and Meena Kandasamy (fiction, poetry and non-fiction) are newer Dalit female voices in literature who explore the unique intersections of caste and gender through their works.

Dalit literature is evolving to address a wider range of issues unique to specific caste communities, with representations of Dalit atrocities against Dalits increasingly appearing in Dalit poetry, fiction, and non-fiction. Though most Dalit narratives, both fictional and non-fictional touch upon some form of atrocities, Dalit massacres are rarely represented in literature. Existing Dalit literature on massacres, either refer to the massacre directly as the main plot or indirectly as a sub-plot using a fictional setting. The use of fictional settings and indirect references often help the authors to avoid controversies especially if the state is denying the massacre per se. Some examples of literature on Dalit massacres are outlined here. Meena Kandasamy has a poem entitled *Liquid Tragedy: Karamchedu 1985* on the Karamchedu massacre in her collection *Touch* which highlights how Dalit assertion for natural resources like water can lead to rape and massacre. She has also authored *The Gypsy Goddess* on the Kilvenmani massacre of 1968 which is a pioneer feminist semi-fictional attempt on a Dalit massacre.

Teltumbde's (2010) *The Peristence of Caste* is one of the earliest works to study a Dalit massacre in detail. He analysed and

theorised upon the socio-cultural and political events that led to the Khairlanji massacre (2006 in Maharashtra). Sujatha Gidla's (2017) *Ants among Elephants – An Untouchable Family and the Making of Modern India* is another example of a work that has references to a Dalit massacre, the Karamchedu massacre (Andhra Pradesh 1985). Non-Dalits like Amitav Ghosh has also written about Dalit massacre in his fictional work *The Hungry Tide* (on the Marichjhapi massacre of West Bengal, 1979) though the massacre does not become the central plot of the narrative. Given the nascent stage of this field and the scarcity of literature, there is greater potential and scope for more fictional (especially graphic narratives) and non-fictional works (like oral histories and analytical case studies) on Dalit massacres and atrocities. Dalit massacres are comparatively more represented (directly and indirectly) in films and documentaries as can be seen in the detailed discussions of the Kilvenmani massacre and the Marichjhapi massacre in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 respectively.

1.1.4 Dalit Theory and Feminist Discourses

Dalit theory and criticism emerged through the contributions of Dalit activists, thinkers, and philosophers, as well as the influence of anti-caste Dalit movements. Dalit theory is a literary and socio-political framework that attempts to combat the historical and cultural caste-based discrimination of the Dalits in India. Like the Dalit literary movement, Dalit theory and criticism also aim to negate the misrepresentations of caste and the Dalit experiences of it. Dr Ambedkar's critique of the inhuman and hierarchical caste system forms the foundation of Dalit theory along with the thoughts and practices of major Dalit activists mentioned in the previous sections. Some of the major Dalit thinkers and theoreticians are Bama, Sharmila Rege, Urmila Pawar, Baby Kamble, Meena Kandasamy, Jotibarao Phule, Dr B. R. Ambedkar, Gopal Guru, Sharankumar Limbale, and

Namdeo Dhasal among others. Dalit aesthetics (elaborated in the previous section), Dalit identity, and Dalit experience are some other prominent concepts of the theory.

Dalit Identity or Dalitness

Dalit identity, in modern India, is an evolving complex and diverse concept based on the historical and cultural experiences of caste sub-ordination. Dalit identity or *Dalitness* encompass their experience of discrimination, struggle, and resilience (Chauhan 2023) against the age-old caste system and is grounded in anti-caste ideology that advocates for self-identity, self-respect, and freedom (Malik 2014). The term refers to the social, political, and cultural identity of Dalits based on their historical struggles and Dalit activism. In standard discourse, it indicates the emerging identity of a group that was formerly known as 'untouchables' (Kumar 2019, p. vii). For the Marathi poet Namdeo Dhasal, the term 'Dalit' encompasses both SCs and STs together with economically oppressed classes, and landless labourers whereas for Gangadhar Pantawane the term is a symbol of change and revolution (Kumar 2019, p. 8). Dalit literature and activism prominently assert Dalit identity by actively negating caste ideology that "strips Dalits of their dignity and personhood, denying them any sense of individual identity" (Chakravarti 2018, p. 7).

Dalit identity can be individual or collective. Individual Dalit identity is mostly asserted through the personal narratives (autobiographies and testimonials). However, these expressions can also be interpreted more broadly as symbolizing the collective struggle of Dalits against systemic violence. For Limbale (2004), Dalit identity is collective, as it transcends language, religion, and cultural traditions. 'Dalit' as collective/communal identity mainly focuses on solidarity with the common caste struggles of the marginalised or oppressed sections. The Dalit Panthers played a significant role in expanding the

meaning of the term to a collective identity of all oppressed sections (Kumar 2019, p. 6). Malik (2014) on the contrary, says that Dalit identity is not homogenous or unified (45), as there has been no unified pan-Indian Dalit movement across the country. The 'sub-caste' movements for instance, highlighted the need to acknowledge the sub-divisions within caste as it believed that "treating all untouchable castes as a homogenous group actually reproduces disparities" (Satyanarayana 2014, p. 57). Thus, there are contesting notions about Dalit identity – as individual, collective, non-homogenous/homogenous, monolith/polycentric. Yet in any sense of the term, it is used as a symbol of pride and assertion for "'equality, self-dignity and eradication of untouchability" (Malik 2014, p. 46). As a developing concept, Dalit identity needs to be seen in terms of commonality among Dalit experiences as "[t]he difference between the Dalit experiences imparts diversity and plurality to Dalit identity" (Chauhan 2023, p. 507).

Further contemporary theorisations also draw on the concept of Dalit identity. Punia (2023) emphasizes the importance of fostering *Dalitude* or an anti-caste proud attitude, as a new political movement of lower-caste solidarity inaugurated by Dalit writers, with which Dalits should reclaim their Dalit identity. *Dalitude* helps Dalits to assert their presence in public spaces from which they were traditionally excluded in a language of their own, especially academic and urban spaces were caste-based profiling is more prominent in the 21st century (24). Dalit feminist theory on the other hand draws on the concept of intersectional identity of Dalit women to differentiate the unique intersections of gender, caste and class in their life experiences. As an evolving theoretical concept, Dalit identity holds the potential to serve as the foundation for more elaborate and complex ideas in the future.

Dalit Experience

Gopal Guru critiques the societal stigmatization of the Dalit body [and experience], arguing that the concept of untouchability (or pollution) serves as a source of caste-based humiliation of the Dalit body (Kumar 2019, p. 10). This according to Guru, should be countered through a total rejection of the caste system or 'rejection of rejection' (10). Guru (2017) also emphasis on Dalit subjectivity and critiques the caste hierarchy in social sciences in India (Guru 2002). He is also noted for his theorisations on lived experiences of Dalits (Guru 2017). Guru also ignited a debate on non-Dalits theorizing about Dalits, a discussion that has garnered both supporters and critics. He is against non-Dalits, who lack lived experiences of Dalits theorising on Dalits as 'objects' of study (Guru 2017). Guru critiques the traditional caste hierarchies that privileged the savarnas (upper-castes within the varna system) with the intellectual capacity to engage in theory, while relegating the 'untouchables'/Dalits/Avarnas to the realm of empirical studies alone. He refers to this dichotomy as the theoretical *Brahmins* versus empirical *Shudras* (Guru 2002) and advocates for empowering the Dalits to undertake theoretical studies. Sarukkai (Guru 2017) adds that Guru's idea of theorization requires both ethics and experience i.e., non-Dalits without experience cannot ethically claim the authorship or ownership of Dalit experience. However, Guru's notion of lived experiences is critiqued by both Dalit and Dalit feminist scholars.

Vandana (2021) critiques Guru's notion of non-Dalits lacking an 'essential Dalit experience' and attributing a 'homogenous subjectivity' to the Dalits as a whole to be problematic. She asks,

> When Dalits speak, for instance, do the male Dalits also speak on behalf of the female Dalits, and vice-versa? Do the middle-class Dalits, who have achieved a considerable upward mobility, qualify to write about the Dalits who are still at the margins? Can

urban-based educated Dalits claim an authentic knowledge of community life and rural dialect? (23)

Paik (2017) is also critical of Guru as having a limited viewpoint, she says, "underlining exclusivity may further confine Dalits and 'other' to their own communities and not allow them to reach out to each other − surely an important directive given that social change will require the vital participation of higher castes as well". Paik therefore highlights the need for having sympathetic non-Dalits or allies who can further the cause of Dalits. Teltumbde (2010) while criticising the notion of lived experience as a criterion for Dalit theorising asks,

> Is it because Dalits are so sectarian that they would not accept others? Is it because the caste consciousness still thwarts others from joining Dalits? Or is it that there is no such thing as civil society in India because it simply cannot exist within the 'uncivil' caste society? (182-83).

Despite facing criticism, Guru succeeded in drawing attention to and initiating discussions on Dalit identity and experiences. Even contemporary theorizations build upon the concept of Dalit experience, as evidenced by the example of the educational theory of Dalit curriculum proposed by Darokar and Bodhi (2022). They propose a curriculum that "seeks to provide a guiding framework to enable the epistemological-axiological reconstruction of the lived experience of Dalits in truly empowering ways" (309) to counter the traditional Brahminical hierarchy in knowledge production. The theoretical debates on Dalit identity and experiences further led to the evolution Dalit feminist thought and criticism.

Dalit Feminism

Dalit women's experiences are distinct and unique as they navigate the 'triple burden' of discrimination based on gender, class, and caste (Patil 2013, p. 214). Chakravarti (2018) outlines the three-way oppression/triple marginalisation/triple burden of Dalit women as:

> (i) as subject to caste oppression at the hands of the upper castes [Dalit identity]; (ii) as labourers subject to the class-based oppression, also mainly at the hands of the upper and middle castes who form the bulk of landowners; (iii) as women who experience patriarchal oppression at the hands of all men, including men of their own caste (135).

The failure of Dalit and mainstream feminist discourses to acknowledge Dalit intersectional identity and experiences of women, led to a new stream of thought referred to as Dalit feminism in the early 1990s (Sabharwal 2015, p. 49). Dalit feminism in terms of women's writings is discussed in the previous section. This section mainly focuses on the theoretical aspects of the movement. The term Dalit feminism was coined by Dr. Sharmila Rege in the 1990s and is grounded in intersectionality, challenging the mainstream feminist discourses that homogenize women's experiences into a "monolithic category of women" (Mohanty 2003). Dalit feminism aims to assert the differences in Dalit female experiences and to give agency and voice to the Dalit women by empowering them to speak about their experiences. Dalit women cannot be assimilated into the broader Indian feminism for different reasons. "The issue of 'freedom of the individual' versus the 'rights of the community' affects Dalit women differently, because their bodies are often used as a means for the upper castes to assert their dominant position over the lowest castes in the hierarchy" (Sabharwal 2015). But Dalit women "have a common cause with Dalit men against casteism that reinforces gendered oppression" (Mahadevan 2019, p. 228). Caste should therefore be placed at the

centre of all Indian feminist endeavours including theory as it is the root-cause of marginalisation of the Dalit woman (Mahadevan 2019, p. 200)

Caste and gender hierarchy operates in a manner that the Dalit women occupy the lowest rank of classification after upper caste men, lower caste men, and upper caste women. Upper caste women, partake and comply to the existing patriarchal and caste system according to Chakravarti (2018, p. 137) as it is more beneficial to stay within the system and enjoy benefits rather than to rebel and loose access to economic resources. She says,

> we see that whether it is conforming to codes of conduct, the upholding of family traditions, and more specifically maintaining the purity rules in the kitchen, women who conform are honoured and respected; at the same time, they perpetuate caste and its restrictions in their everyday lives (139).

Dalit women, therefore experience discrimination from upper caste women as well.

Sabharwal, 2015 through their empirical study of official data and surveys on Dalit women's socio-economic position in contemporary Indian society concludes that Dalit women face challenges in the following realms: economic deprivation, educational deprivation, poor health, caste- and untouchability-based discrimination in accessing sources of livelihood, public services, and political participation, caste-based atrocities and violence, temple prostitution, and gender discrimination (52). The violence against Dalit women are of four main forms according to Diwakar (2022) — physical assault, verbal abuse, sexual harassment and sexual assault and rape. Dalit women are therefore "doubly Dalit" (Jogdand, 1995)

in experiencing caste and gender-based discrimination when compared to their male counterparts.

Discourses in Dalit Feminism

Gopal Guru has made notable contributions in Dalit feminist theory and discourse (Guru 1995). He asserted the need for Dalit feminism and the need for Dalit women to talk differently based on external and internal factors and dismissed the argument that Dalit feminism will disrupt feminist solidarity (Guru 1995). He introduced the concept of 'Dalit patriarchy' as an internal factor within the community of Dalits as opposed to the external factor 'Brahmanical patriarchy' both of which operates against Dalit women. He asserts that, in addition to caste, class, and gender intersections, Dalit patriarchy and the role of local resistance by Dalit women in asserting their identity also shape their unique voice. As a result, Dalit women are compelled to speak in ways that differ from both feminist and Dalit male perspectives. He considers "the representation of dalit women's issues by non-dalit women as less valid and less authentic" (2548) and the call for feminist solidarity as whitewashing to allow a non-Dalit woman to speak on her behalf (2549). While attempting to understand the Dalit female experiences it is also important to acknowledge 'the politics of difference' (which asserts their differential experiences as 'Dalits' and as 'women') put forth by Guru (1995) directed against the Brahminical patriarchy (caste-based) and patriarchy perpetrated by Dalit men (gender-based). Guru also asserts the importance of analysing Dalit female issues within their own historic locations.

While Guru initiated the discourse on Dalit feminism, his stance that lived experiences of Dalits are essential for theorization is challenged by Dalit feminists like Rege, especially on the basis of intersectionality and presentation skills in terms of research (Mahadevan 2019). In fact, if we were to follow Guru's idea, it raises the question of how he, as an

ally, can speak on behalf of Dalit women, considering that he does not share their lived experiences. Sharmila Rege (1998) is a prominent Dalit feminist who differs with Guru by formulating the 'Dalit Feminist Standpoint' where she argues that a categorisation based on differences will lead to placing the responsibility of addressing caste on Dalit feminists alone. Therefore, she suggests the incorporation of non-Dalit feminists by educating themselves to enrich the Dalit feminist theory. Rege is also criticised by later theoreticians like Chaya Datar (1999), who highlighted Rege's failure to engage with ecofeminism (relation between women and nature/ecology) and to interrogate the industrial and technological paradigm which promotes urbanisation and centralisation.

Guru's concept of lived experience is contested in the context of research by Mahadevan (2019). Following Hennessy's concept of 'discursive positionality', Mahadevan (2019) states that an academic professional researcher "can dwell on the experiences expressed in testimonies to mediate and filter them in the course of articulating them in more general modes. . . in which the researcher engages with the experiences of others and represent them – albeit from a third-person point of view" by assuming a "presentational" role (225). While it is important to emphasise Guru's notion of empowering the Dalits to theorise on their own, in the current absence of Dalit female agency, it is also important to facilitate an egalitarian co-working of the researcher and the Dalit (women) without any form of patronising, until the former task is accomplished. This helps in addressing the missing voices of Dalit women in mainstream history through research. "Research is, thus, a process of collaboration between the participant speaker and the researcher who listens, a process in which both learn from each other" (Mahadevan 2019, p. 226). Mahadevan (2019) also posits that a researcher can help with Dalit feminist theorising by acquiring propositional knowledge through discourse, history and

embodiment and also by engaging with the feminist data through the lens of empathy, care and feeling (231-232). "That is, an authentic theorisation is possible *only* when the subjects and the objects of feminist research coincide" ((Mahadevan 2019, p. 199).

Dalit activism, literature, and theory, therefore empowered Dalits to assert their rights against the discriminatory practices of the caste system. This provoked the upper castes, who upon perceiving a threat to their social dominance retaliated with violence. The continued exploitation, discrimination, and violence against Dalits and Dalit women, as detailed in the next section, demonstrate that little has been done to improve their conditions in postcolonial, independent India.

The literature review conducted for this study revealed that although the condition of Dalits has significantly improved since independence, the persistent caste system and its ongoing systemic discrimination have continued to hinder their social mobility. The extend of caste discrimination in India is not surprising given the all-pervasiveness of caste. Some of which includes lack of strict enforcement of the existing laws like the Prevention of Atrocities Act (PoA, 1989), denial of basic rights and resources, unequal economic and educational opportunities based on caste identity. The legal aspects that lead to caste discrimination, in terms of laws and state policies are discussed in detail in the next section on atrocities and massacres. The section also looks at the symbolic and structural forms of discrimination that exists in higher education institutes in India along with the possible ways to ensure justice and prevention of various forms of discrimination.

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

Dalit Atrocities

Atrocities against Dalits are systematic acts of violence and discrimination rooted in the entrenched caste system practiced in India.

Violence against Dalits has always been an endemic and structural feature of the caste system (Chakravarti 2018, p. 166). Dalit atrocities are often violent, physically and materialistically destructive and brutal. "Atrocities, as defined under the Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities [PoA]) Act, 1989, are considered the violent manifestation of societal prejudice against dalits" (Teltumbde 2010, p. 154). Section 3 of the PoA Act defines eighteen offenses as atrocities against Dalits and Adivasis, including violence against women, land dispossession, arson, and property destruction (78). Atrocities are fundamentally human rights violations characterized by extreme cruelty, brutality, and inhumanity (29). These crimes according to PoA are committed against an SC/ST man, woman or child by a person(s) who is not an SC or ST (Chakravarti 2018, p. 169). Atrocities are a manifestation of the upper caste pride or the need to uphold the casteist social order and Dalits have been "habitual target of insult, humiliation, injury and sexual abuse, [and] have been the structural victims of gross violence since the inception of the caste system" (Teltumbde 2010, p. 30).

Besides the non-Dalits or upper caste there are several other institutions that act as the direct or indirect perpetrators of the atrocities. Teltumbde (2010) in his extensive study of the Khairlanji massacre (September 2006) in Maharashtra, establishes that the all-pervasive anti-Dalit bias of the state (government, police or military), the judiciary, the media and civil society enable the perpetrators to commit anti-Dalit atrocities (34). He says that even if Dalits are part of the bureaucracy, they fail to deliver justice as they comply with the caste system (183). Uma Chakravarti (2018) also backs Teltumbde when she says that the state may or may not be a direct perpetrator of caste violence "but its institutional apparatus is available and is used to provide impunity to the perpetrators through the obstructions and impediments that the police and the criminal justice system place in

ensuring justice to the survivors of violence" (Chakravarti 2018, p. 181).

Muthukkaruppan (2017) classifies caste violence into three types: the visible or physical violence (occurs when the caste system is challenged by the Dalits), and the invisible structural violence and symbolic violence (that operates together as symbolic violence through language, discourses and representation normalises the structural violence like discrimination and exclusion) (56). Mob-raids, murder, arson and rape are some of the physical violence meted out on the Dalits (Kumar 2019, p. 3). Social exclusion (and spatial segregation), institutional discrimination and economic deprivation are the other forms of visible and invisible atrocities that highlight the caste struggles of the marginalised communities in India. Social and economic deprivation are another form of visible violence against Dalits where they are denied access to resources or prevented from exercising their basic rights. Collective punishment, where an entire family (as in the Khairlanji massacre) or an entire community (the Kilvenmani massacre) is 'punished' for the defiance of an individual or group of individuals, is another form of physical atrocity that the upper-caste uses to 'ground' the Dalits. Besides physical abuse, Dalits also suffer from mental abuse from the upper caste perpetrators (Dipankar 2023).

Dalit atrocities are mostly taking place in rural parts of India (Prasad et al. 2020). Teltumbde (2010) says in his work on the Khairlanji massacre that, while "[e]very village in India is a potential Khairlanji . . . Khairlanjis [are not] confined to rural India alone" (43). Symbolic and structural violence continue to take place in professional (Jaoul 2008, p. 26), urban, and academic spaces. Muthukkaruppan (2017), highlights the structural violence in academic spaces like IITs

(Indian Institute of Technology) and IIMs (Indian Institute of Management) in India.

It is no surprise that the IITs and IIMs and such institutions till today represent Hindu character both in terms of thinking and of presence. They are the leading institutions in terms of suicide of Dalit students or protest against reservations or other forms of social conservatism (62).

The persistence of caste system and casteist atrocities – physical, structural and symbolic in modern India are further exemplified by the list of atrocities from 2018 to 2021 outlined by Prajapati and Surya (2022, p. 399). The cases reported include atrocities resulting from mixing of Dalit and non-Dalit population, rape and sexual assault, assertion of rights by Dalits, harassment and/or resignation of school and college Dalit staff and faculties (including IITs), physical assault, and polluting food of the upper-caste among others (399). "According to national crimes statistics report, the crimes against Dalits have increased by 19.4 per cent at present, while the number of cases registered under the Scheduled Castes (Dalit) and Scheduled Tribes (Adivasis) (Prevention of Atrocities) Act have also risen every year since 2011" (Prasad et al, 2020 9).

Reasons for Caste Atrocities

Caste-based atrocities mainly occur "when the Dalit attempts to trespass the rigid caste spaces" (Vandana 2021, p. 24), 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, p. 42).

For the precipitation of a caste crime, there needs to be an immediate cause, a provocation, natural or fabricated, that acts as the spark, a sufficient excuse. Invariably, caste prejudices and resentment create conditions that may provoke defiant behaviour

from Dalits, which then could be used as 'justification' for a violent reaction (71).

Land disputes especially in the cases where Dalits are landowners (as in the Khairlanji massacre), also translates to violent caste crimes (180). Another reason is their "relative weakness – numerical, physical, and social" that render the Dalits powerless in the face of a caste atrocity (51). Dalit atrocities primarily arise from issues related to Dalit assertion and their demand for socio-political empowerment, as well as their struggle for basic rights, including access to resources such as land, water, food, public institutions, and other services (Prasad et al. 2020, p. 9).

Teltumbde (2010) in his chapter on *The Political Economy of Atrocities*, outlines the reasons for Dalit atrocities as: the notion of entitlement among the upper castes, rise in economic disparity after globalisation, and assertion of basic rights by the Dalits. Before independence the upper castes considered themselves to be entitled to 'punishing' Dalits. After independence with the implementation of reservation policies for the upliftment of the Dalits and "with a sense of loss of that right" (31) they used violence to quench their grudge over the rise of Dalit assertion of independence and dignity. The economic growth of certain castes within the *Shudra* class, like the Backward Castes (BC's) and Other Backward Castes (OBC's) have resulted in an increased rate of atrocities and massacres against Dalits post 1960s (46). This clash was a result of the new role of the *shudras* as landowners under the policy reforms post-independence while the Dalits continued to remain as landless labourers. Finally, the Communist class struggles empowered the Dalit labourers to assert and fight for their rights including their right to vote or participate in the fundamentals of democratic franchise, also leading to caste-atrocities (60). The upper caste while believing that they are entitled to commit

atrocities against Dalits, also perceive atrocities or 'taking justice into their own hands' as a form of 'self-defence' against undue indulgence that the Dalits receive from the state in terms of reservation and other provisions (Fuchs 2020, p. 399). The ultimate aim of caste crimes rooted in caste prejudice, is to teach the Dalits a lesson or to show them their right place in accordance with the social hierarchies of the caste system.

Justice and Prevention

Venkatesan (2009) 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). A survivor of the Dangawas Massacre (2015, Rajasthan) also expressed along the same lines,

> We want to live in peace (shanti se) in our village,' he said, 'but for that we need people's thoughts (sooch) to change. They must allow us to have the space that belongs to us. If the thoughts of the Jats don't change, violence will happen again and again, as soon as we demand our rights. We will never feel justice (nyaya mehsus nahin karenge). …Of course, we want justice under the PoA but the law lives in courts, we need to live here without fear!' Another man nodded. 'He is right,' he said, 'our village is divided. What can the law do about that? It cannot give us our room in society (samaj mein jagah nahi de sakta)' (Fuchs 2020, p. 401).

Denial of the Atrocities by the State and Other Institutions is a major problem encountered while attempting to ensure justice for the victims and survivors of atrocities. "The casteist nature of the violence is erased under other explanations such as conflicts over land, of

motives of revenge, or of political and electoral battles" (Chakravarti 2018, p. 184). Despite recent wide media coverages of atrocities, the apathy and caste-bias of government officials both hinders prevention of atrocities as well as delays the process of justice for the victims (Bob 2007, 173).

PoA Act is the result of governmental and institutional response to the rise in Dalit atrocities. However, this act has failed in providing justice to the victims of the atrocities as its implementation is still negligible (Jaoul 2008). Teltumbde (2018) critiques the PoA Act stating that the act is not enforced even in cases that clearly fall within its limits because of the caste bias of the police and judiciary. Prasad et al (2020) also backs this critique of the failure in the implementation of the PoA Act through his comprehensive research on the atrocities against the Ganda caste using primary (testimonials) and secondary data (newspaper reports and websites). Even when the law is enforced, there are several obstacles in proving the crime and obtaining justice (Prasad et al 2020 11). A detailed analysis and critique of the legal aspects of atrocities against Dalits, including PoA Act and further steps for justice can be found in chapter 6, the concluding chapter of this thesis. In the absence of social and legal justice against atrocities, powerless groups like Dalits and other marginalised communities, resort to "public staging of [their] anger and moral outrage" (1) which in turn etches the violence and the protest in public collective memory (Jaoul 2008 27). Literature and art are also used to keep the memories of violence and injustice alive by the Dalits. The next section deals with Dalit massacres, another form of mass violence against Dalits.

Dalit Massacres – Towards an Understanding of Massacres and Dalit Massacres

Massacre studies is an evolving interdisciplinary area in the field of humanities with the scholars from History, Philosophy,

Psychology, Sociology, Anthropology, Literature etc., theorizing and contributing to the field. Though massacres occur frequently even in the present times, the socio-cultural, historical, religious (caste-based) and psychological reasons behind Indian (Dalit) massacres are neglected. Two major factors that led to this negligence are the overshadowing of massacre studies globally by genocide studies especially holocaust and the lack of a proper legal definition for the term 'massacre' at the national (India) and international levels. Conversely, there are substantial theorizations on massacres and massacre studies in the West (Semelin 2003: Dwyer and Lyndall 2012 being prominent figures in massacre studies) when compared to India. The prevailing narratives on Indian massacres (cite) reveal a significant gap in caste-based analysis, particularly from the perspectives of the victims, survivors, and perpetrators of the violence, with only a few exceptions (like Teltumbde 2010; Human Rights Watch 1999; Sinha 1996).

Massacre studies are neglected across the globe when compared to other popular fields like genocide and Holocaust globally and partition studies in India (Dwyer and Lyndall 2013). "The scholarship surrounding massacre as a phenomenon in history often falls into the shadow of genocide, or the word 'genocide' is often used to denote mass killings that would better be described as massacre" (Dwyer 2013). The lack of a proper legal definition of the term 'massacre' (Dwyer and Lyndall 2013) also makes the classification and identification of massacres difficult. The number of deaths involved in violence, time, and geographical location of the massacre, are often used as parameters in classifying an event as massacre, genocide, or mass killings. However, sociologists involved in the study of massacres remain divided in this regard. Some argue that the killing of even one individual could account to massacre (Corbin, 1992)

whereas according to the Guatemala Human Rights Commission (1989) in the United States, a minimum of three deaths should occur to consider an event as a massacre. The absence of an academic theoretical framework in the field is further evident in the lack of recognized journals dedicated to massacre studies, compelling leading figures in the field to publish in journals focused on genocide research. An example of this could be seen in the 15(2) special issue of the *Journal of Genocide Research (2013)* which is dedicated to articles on or related to massacre studies.

Defining Massacres and Dalit Massacres

In the introduction to the *Theatres of Violence*, Philip G. Dwyer and Lyndall (2012) defines massacre as,

> . . . the killing by one group of people by another group of people, regardless of whether the victims are armed or not, regardless of age or sex, race, religion, and language, and regardless of political, cultural, racial, religious, or economic motives for the killing. The killing can be either driven by official state policy or can occur because of the state's lack of control over those groups or collectives on the ground. Massacres, in other words, can occur with or without official state sanctions although the state, especially in the colonial context, often turns a blind eye to the killing of indigenous peoples by groups of settler-colonizers that are geographically removed from the center of power and over which it has little or no control. The massacre is limited in time, that is, it takes place over hours or days, not months and years, and is generally confined in geographical space.

Semelin (2003) refers to massacre as 'mass crime' whereas Dwyer and Lyndall (2012) indicate that the term is still used "to

describe the killing of one man by a group of people, just as it is used to describe the indiscriminate slaughter of thousands". Based on the nature of violence and the characteristics of the people involved in it, Semelin further states that massacres are "most often collective and aimed at destroying those who are not fighters but rather civilians, men, women, children and unarmed soldiers" and "that the victims, far from being unknown to their torturers, often belong to the same community or village" (Semelin, 2003).

From the literature review (Corbin 1992; Semelin 2003; Dwyer and Lyndall 2012 & 2013), it is evident that the existing studies and theorizations on massacres are mostly Western/European. To understand the nature and context of massacres in postcolonial South Asian countries we need to look deep into the regional frameworks within these countries, one of which in India, is caste. A major problem encountered while researching on Indian Dalit massacres is that the term 'massacre' is seldom used to describe the violence against Dalits. The term 'atrocity' is generally favored to 'massacre' in Dalit scholarship thereby indicating a resistance to using the latter (searching for 'Dalit massacres' in Shodhganga, the digital reservoir of Indian PhD theses, gives no relevant result but the search on 'Dalit atrocities give results on gender-based and caste-based research). Even Teltumbde (2010) uses the term atrocity in most part of his work (Teltumbde 2010). He uses the terms 'caste crimes', 'atrocity' and 'massacre' interchangeably to refer to the Kharlanji massacre and other Dalit massacres.

'Atrocity', a passive noun, is preferred to 'massacre', an active verb. This deliberate choice reveals that there is a general reluctance to use the active verb, which has more political impact, against the perpetrators of the violence. The passive noun 'atrocity' reduces the impact of the action itself in contrast to massacre which

highlights who is performing the action. This preference for the term, when thus analyzed semantically, reveals the political and socio-cultural bias or hierarchy that is in operation. Additionally, there are laws that protect the Dalits against atrocities in India but none on Dalit massacres (PoA Act, 1989), which in turn encourages the Dalit scholars and victims to use the legal term that can help in addressing their cause and grievances related to violence against Dalits. Indian parliament does not define minority massacres, rather, only atrocities against SC and ST communities are considered within the legal framework (which also points to the dire need for developing the same). The Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 defines the term 'atrocity' as "an expression commonly used to refer to crimes against Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) in India". It "denotes the quality of being shockingly cruel and inhumane, whereas the term 'crime' relates to an act punishable by law" (PoA Act, 1989). Even recent researchers (like Prasad 2020), view Dalit massacres as atrocities. Such responses are due to the lack of a proper definition for massacres let alone that of Dalit massacres. In this study we assert the significance of differentiating and acknowledging Dalit massacres from Dalit atrocities.

Merriam webster defines massacre as "the act or an instance of killing a number of usually helpless or unresisting human beings under circumstances of atrocity or cruelty". Therefore, massacre is a broader term incorporating atrocities, and not vice-versa. In the context of this study, we begin by defining Dalit massacres broadly as, 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. The killings are limited in time and confined in geographical space as mentioned by Dwyer and Lyndall (2012). But in

contrast to their definition of massacres that does not take into consideration the race, religion, language or other political and socio-cultural background of the victims, Dalit massacres are mainly executed with the aim of killing the victims based on their caste (religion) as we have seen in the case of Dalit atrocities. Dalit massacres are visible forms of violence that is a physical manifestation of the structural and symbolic violences that are normalised by the caste system.

Dalit massacres emerged as a new phenomenon of caste violence in the late 1960s and 70s with the Kilvenmani massacre (1968) in Tamil Nadu, Belchi massacre (1977) in Bihar and Karamchedu massacre (1985) in Andhra Pradesh serving as the initial documented events (Satyanarayana 2014). Dalit massacres are to be seen as a new form of caste violence different from the caste atrocities that were already prevalent in India (Satyanarayana 2014) since it began as a result of increasing Dalit assertion of basic rights and dignity. In India, Dalit massacres often do not garner the attention of the state mainly due to the same reasons pointed out by Dwyer and Lyndall (2012) above. Dalits being the backward and the indigenous community of India are often violently removed from their geographical locations, through caste-based massacres executed by the upper caste often with the state averting its gaze intentionally (citations). While studying Dalit massacres, it is important to look at three main phases of the massacre: first, the cultural, political and/or economical events before the massacre that eventually culminated in the mass killing of the Dalits; second, the events during the massacre (pertaining to the questions of how, who, where, and the role of the state machinery); and finally the events after the massacre (causalities, trauma, rehabilitation, survivor responses, revenge, legal proceedings, newspaper reporting, research and other studies).

Before the Massacre

The main reasons for Dalit massacres (that couples with the caste identity of the victims) are already detailed in the atrocities section as there are no clear demarcations between massacres and atrocities in existing researches. Some important ones are reinstated here along with examples: land dispute and overstepping caste hierarchies (the Dangawas massacre); wage increase (Kilvenmani and Bathani Tola massacres); political autonomy and socio-economic advancement of Dalits (Karamchedu, and Chundur massacres); rise of Marxist/Communist party and Dalit labour organisations (Kilvenmani and Laxmanpur-bathe massacres); and accusing assault of upper caste women by Dalit men as a justification for massacres (Karamchedu and Chundur massacres). It is important to note that this list is not exhaustive, as new reasons for Dalit massacres continue to emerge with shifting socio-economic and political contexts. The transformations of caste hierarchies due to the above cited reasons triggers the upper caste to retaliate and assert their caste status and dignity through violence. "Land represents economic security, as well as a more intangible sense of status and having a voice in the community" (Fuchs 2020, p. 398). Dalit ownership of land is hence seen as a first step towards social equality and hence it is prevented at any cost. Massacres are a political and cultural tool that reinstate the feudal domination of the upper caste (and class) (Bhatia 1997, p. 3243). Sushmita (2014) observes,

> It was in a bid to terrorise the oppressed masses and to oust them out of this struggle, the ruling classes initiated these massacres. Thus, these massacres were actually direct product of feudal oppression as well as a reaction to the fight for land and dignity which was directly connected to the battle against present structure of the state (42).

Caste therefore acts "as a form of power that unleashes brutal physical violence such as massacres" (Satyanarayana 2014, p. 53).

During the Massacre

Arson and destruction of Dalit property and houses are the most common ways of carrying out Dalit massacres. Mob-raids, murder and rape are the physical violence inflicted upon the victims during the massacre. Upper caste men are often the direct perpetrators of Dalit massacres though there are indirect perpetrators like the state and its machinery who silently facilitates such brutal acts of violence through its inaction. Massacres are not often directly executed by the perpetrators rather there are third party involvement such like henchmen in the case of the Kilvenmani massacre or armed organizations (private militias or *senas* like the Ranvir Sena in the Bathani Tola massacre) and criminal gangs as in the Dehuli massacre. In case of state sponsored massacres, often by the upper caste who are part of the government, the violence is usually carried out by police or militia (police as in the Marichjhapi massacre and military as in The Twin Peak massacres of Siwalik). In some cases, it is difficult to identify or classify the perpetrators as in the case of the Dangawas massacre in which a violent upper caste mob from the village planned and executed the crime. The state and the police may not always be directly involved in the massacre as they can be indirect perpetrators by silently facilitating the violence. There are multiple instances where the police refuse to act at the time of the massacre even if they are informed earlier or are located close to the event as in Kilvenmani, Khairlanji, Dangawas (Fuchs 2020, p. 396), and Bathani Tola (Bhatia 2013) among others.

After the Massacre

Studying the events after Dalit massacre is difficult even to this day due to the lack of documentation of the causalities, crimes and other incidents related to the violence. The existing research on Dalit massacres are either direct studies or indirect studies. Indirect studies on massacre like (Satyanarayana 2014) does not entirely focus on the massacre rather looks at the broader socio-cultural and political events that led to the massacre. Direct studies like Sinha (1996), Teltumbde (2010) and Kanagasabai (2014), among others discuss the massacres in detail and critiques the events before, during and after the massacre thereby offering a comprehensive overview of the event. However, most research articles only describe the massacre or document the events in detail (Bhatia 1997) as even this primary step has not yet been done. Examples of detailed studies on a specific massacre are: Kanagasabai (2014) who looked at the fictional representation of the Kilvenmani massacre. Bhatias (2013) detailed study of the Bathani Tola massacre (1996) in Bihar which traces the timeline of the event, investigation and court proceedings while also naming the victims and the perpetrators. Fuchs' (2020) extensive study of the Meghwal survivors of the Dangawas massacre covering the events before, during and after the massacre. Fuchs (2020) is one of the initial scholars to connect the trauma of the survivors to 'land, space and peace' (401).

Fuchs (2020) talks about the post-trauma of the victims in terms of "the severe rupture of ordinary life (Das 2006), feelings of abandonment by the state and the risk of repeated violence" coupled with "physical suffering, the loss of community, the destruction of their land and the stress of an ongoing court case, but also with practical household issues" (Fuchs 2020, p. 394-95). Based on Fuchs' (2020) study, survivors of Dalit massacres may react in one of two ways: continue fighting for justice and political assertion of Dalit identity or withdraw and live in fear. The latter response was observed among the survivors of the Dangawas massacre as "traumatic paralysis can

temporarily affect people's ability to practice and imagine immediate forms of political assertion" (Fuchs 2020, pp. 394). A similar response is also observed in the Laxmanpur-bathe massacre. "Those who survive continue to feel insecure for they had heard their attackers pledge to kill a hundred. They fear that the worse is not over yet, and that they may come back" (Bhatia 1997, p. 3243). Notably both the survivor responses occur while the victims continue to live in the same spaces where they endured violence, often without any rehabilitation. The apathy of mainstream media, state machinery, and the judiciary, as highlighted in cases of Dalit atrocities, is also reflected in the occurrences of massacres. The lack of timely intervention from such socio-political institutions leads to increase in Dalit massacres (Bhatia 2013). Absence of proper implementation of the PoA act and the absence of a legal framework for Dalit massacres are other factors that lead to repeated massacres across the country. When the judicial system and the state fail to deliver justice to the victims, they resort to vengeance (Bhatia 2013, p. 41) as seen in the murder of the perpetrators (example the Kilvenmani massacre).

Dalit Massacres – Space, Caste, and Gender

The relation between Dalits and space on the basis of the caste system and spatial segregation and the critique of this relationship is discussed in the previous section entitled 'Dalits'. While conducting a literature review on Dalit massacres for this study (like Teltumbde 2010, Satyanarayana 2014, and Diwakar 2020) we were unable to find a single comprehensive study or one relevant documentation that lists and analyses the Dalit massacres in India over a period of time (though there are separate studies focusing on specific massacres alone like Sinha 1996, Teltumbde 2010, Kanagasabai 2014, and Fuchs 2020). Therefore, to locate the Dalit massacres after independence, various sources from newspapers to research articles and books were referred

to compile a database and to plot the map shown in figure 1. On examining figure 1 below, it is evident that the major Dalit massacres in India post-independence are concentrated in the southern states of Tamil Nadu (4), Andhra Pradesh (2), Karnataka (1), and the northern states of Bihar (2), Maharashtra (2), Haryana (1), Rajasthan (1) and West Bengal (1). This raises concerns about the relation between spatial location of Dalits (caste) and the frequency of the massacres. The current study hypothesizes that this connection between caste and spatial location plays a crucial role in Dalit massacres: that the caste identity of Dalits determines where they live, which makes them more visible and vulnerable to large-scale caste and gender violence or massacres.

The spatiality of caste becomes evident through the historical connections between the caste system and space which is also visible in Figure 1. Land or physical space "plays a central role in the Dalit struggle for recognition and socio-political equality" (Fuchs 2020, p. 398). Also, land or place names become synonymous with Dalit massacres and its trauma after the violence as seen in Kilvenmani, Marichjhapi, Khairjani, and Karamchedu among others. However, the relations between space and caste in Dalit massacres are yet to be explored given the general reluctance to acknowledge and study the massacres. Research and theoretical work at the intersections of space, caste, and gender in Dalit massacres is even more limited. Consequently, we return to the main research question of this study, "Where are the women of independent India's Dalit Massacres?"
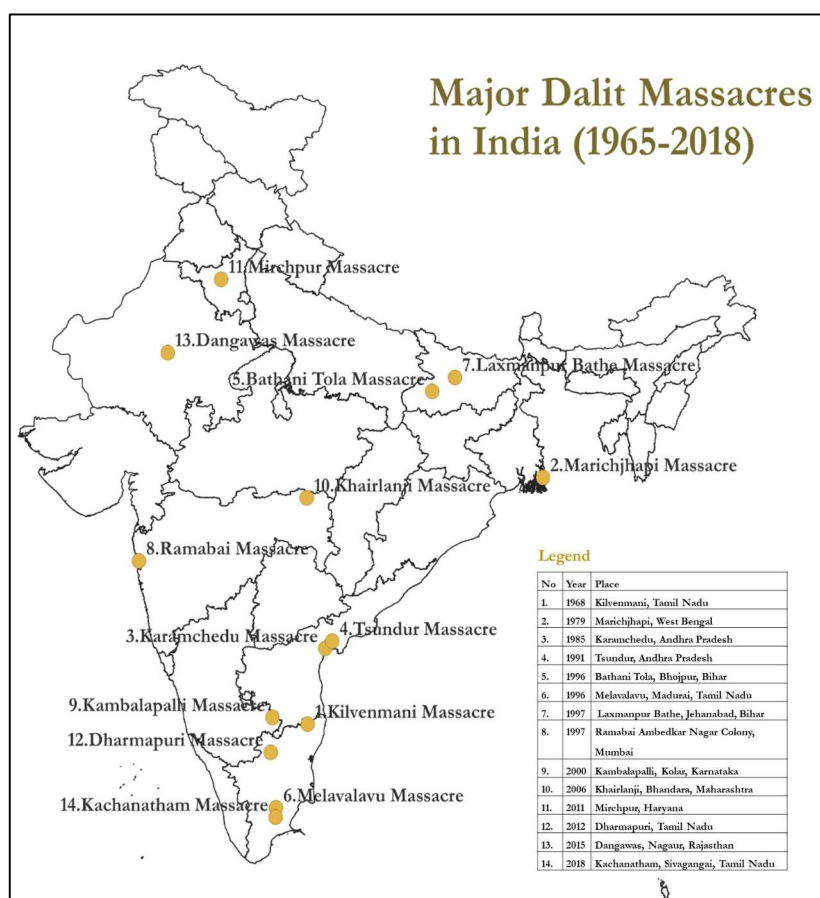
Figure 1: Map on the Major Dalit Massacres in India (1965-2018)

1.3 Background: Locating the women of Dalit massacres – Where are they?

When, for example, you are a Dalit woman, you face double discrimination leading to social, political and economic exclusion and often worse.

- Ziad Sheikh, UN Women Representative and acting UN Resident Coordinator

Ziad Sheik's quote on the double marginalisation of Dalit women throws light on how caste and gender are intersectional. Dalit women have played an active role in Dalit movements (previously elaborated in the section on the role of women in Dalit activism) in an

effort to fight against the caste-based discrimination and patriarchy. Dalit woman's assertion of fundamental rights have also led to an increase in atrocities and instigate the upper caste to commit massacres. The Khairlanji massacre, for example, stemmed from several factors, including the act by "two [Dalit] women [Surekha and Priyanka who] had the temerity to use their fundamental right to file an FIR in a crime that they had witnessed" (Chakravarti 2018, p. 178). Sinha (1996) highlights the gender aspect of the Bathani Tola massacre that was raised by a feminist organisation.

> What was it that led to the massacre in Bathani Tola? Was it a communal question, a caste question, a class question, or to add one more dimension, was it a gender question? The last dimension was highlighted by a feminist organisation arguing that the victims of the massacre were women ('nari samhar'/ killing of women) (2908).

Dalit women face both gender and caste oppression based on their caste location (Mahadevan 2019, p. 228), in the form of sexual violence. They are 'traditionally' regarded as being 'available' to the dominant caste men (Chakravarti 2018, p. 183). Honour killings are another form of violence meted out on Dalit women. Honour is an important concept within the caste Hindu families and family honour is preserved through the purity of women through endogamous marriages (Chakravarti 2018, p. 143). Any violation of this caste honour, usually in the form of inter-caste marriages can result in honour killings of the couple by the parents themselves. "Sexual violence was central to the acts of power to reassert domination: women were dishonoured: this was the worst type of atrocities committed on the SCs" (Chakravarti 2018, p. 173). Besides this, stripping and parading Dalit women is also seen as a form of punishment (169). Violence against Dalit women and girls in casteist villages, however, fail to garner the attention and

momentum received in the country against gender-based violence on other castes, as exemplified by the Nirbhaya rape case (170). Violence against Dalit women is therefore naturalized and most cases on Dalit massacres does not acknowledge or convict the perpetrators of gender-based violence that occur as part of the massacre (parading, stripping and rape among others) e.

Dalit women also face harassment and abuse by upper caste in their daily life in villages (Balagopal 1991, p. 2401) but the violence is escalated in Dalit massacres. During Dalit massacres, women experience both gender and caste-based violence as they are subjected to physical and sexual assault. Rape and sexual violence are often used as political weapons to silence both Dalit men and women as it can have larger impact on the victim's family and community (Chakravarti 2018, p. 173). Sexual violence survivors and their family experience "enormous social suffering, dislocation, disruption of livelihood, and fear" (Chakravarti 2018, p. 182) if they pursue a legal case against their casteist perpetrators. The physical and mental trauma of the female survivors slows the recovery process of the household issues and thereby the community. Balagopal (1991) observes that during massacres,

> . . . men and women of exceptional courage and intelligence-are isolated and subjugated by murder, rape, ostracism and arson. Of these, rape is perhaps the most common, for it works as a weapon against the woman as well as her husband, whichever of the two is politically targeted, but it is also the least reported of all the 'atrocities against Dalits'" (2403).

Lack of proper documentation of violence against women during the massacres, low rates of conviction and the apathy of the police force makes it even more difficult to understand the Dalit woman's experiences after the massacres. Dalit women also lead

protests against casteist massacres and the indifference of the state as seen in the case of the Khairlanji massacre (Teltumbde 2010, 117).

Theorising Dalit feminism in the context of Dalit massacres is a complicated task as upper caste women act as enablers or perpetrators of massacres even though they occupy a less powerful position in the caste hierarchy as compared to the lower caste. Some massacre with upper caste women as perpetrators are the massacres in Sarasgaon, Rupasur, Tsunduru and Khairjanji. Women of the Dalit massacres cannot be considered as a homogenous category as upper caste women can assume the role of a perpetrator as opposed to Dalit women who are victims and/or activists. Therefore, massacre experiences of the upper caste woman and lower caste women should be analysed separately as, intersectionality – of gender and caste – operates during Dalit massacres. Chakravarti (2018) says in the context of the Sirasgaon violence of 1963, "[w]omen are at the heart of the conflict as protagonists and as victims, and also as aggressors in this new moment of constitutionally protected/granted rights to all citizens equally" (169).

Telumbde (2010) observes, along similar lines, in the context of the Khairlanji massacre,

> Women were active participants, say such witnesses as were willing to speak. . . Rushing into the hut, the women in the mob first dragged Priyanka and Surekha [the victims] out by their hair, beat them and tore off their clothes (101).

Upper caste women often become aggressors when they perceive threats to their modesty from lower caste men. In contrast, this dynamic does not apply to Dalit women, as upper caste men feel entitled to exploit them. However, during legal proceedings of caste-

based atrocities, women are often acquitted on the basis that they have no agency in such events.

Intersectional factors like gender and caste makes it necessary to recognise 'the politics of differences' (Guru 1995) in the lived experiences of women within the locations that they inhabit. However, the continued atrocities ad violence against women during massacres suggests that their conditions have not improved even after independence. Even in the research front, the Dalit female experiences, especially in Dalit massacres, are seldom studied or acknowledged. K. Satyanarayana (2014) traces the history and politics of Dalit massacres across the country in *Dalit Reconfiguration of Caste: Representation, Identity and Politics*. He also identifies the lack of attention paid to the relation between caste identity and spatial location when he says, "the social division of Karamchedu village on the basis of caste identity is not examined" (46). Though he attempts to look at the identity politics of the Dalits in the contemporary period, his paper "does not address the complexity of conceptualising caste in the context of questions raised by Dalit feminists and Other Backward Classes" (59). The few existing research and narratives that focus on the Dalit massacres either fails to acknowledge the spatial identity (historical/cultural/political location) of Dalits or that of the gendered (here female) experiences.

In a nutshell, the mass movements and Dalit uprisings of the 1980s and 1990s and their subsequent assertion of rights are the reason behind Dalit/Minority Massacres across the country. The changing socio-political and cultural scenario in the sub-continent gave more power and knowledge to the Dalits as a result of which the upper castes killed Dalits (often using arson) in an attempt to reassert their caste power (Satayanarayan, 2014). When such massacres took place rape/sex was used as a political weapon against the Dalit women in order to silence their retaliation against power (Diwakar, 2020) as

violence against women had an impact on the victim's family as well as the community. Such exploitations were often related to their spatial location, that is, the caste village to which they belonged and their spatial proximity to upper caste neighbourhoods. Our review of literature for this study covering direct and indirect studies of Dalit massacres in India reveals a lack of female narratives and representation concerning their caste-based position (exceptions like Teltumbde 2010, Satayanarayan 2014 and Diwakar 2020 and others cited in the preceding sections). Although there are studies that document individual massacres, there is a lack of: 1) comprehensive gendered and comparative research on Dalit massacres, and 2) studies that explore both fictional and non-fictional narratives of these events — especially with a focus on female survivors. Thus, this study aims to foreground the female survivor experiences of space and caste in selected Dalit massacres in India by using both fctional and non-fictional sources.

1.4 Research Gaps, Questions and Objectives

Gaps

An extensive exploration of the research conducted on the Dalit massacres in India led to the following conclusions:

6. there is a lack of female narratives especially in terms of survivor accounts in both fictional and non-fictional texts related to the massacres.
7. there are no comparative studies of Dalit massacres or the female experiences of the massacres in terms of space, caste and gender relations.
8. there are no legal or theoretical frameworks for understanding Dalit massacres in India.
9. there are no educational resources on Dalit massacres.

10. there are no digital humanities or spatial humanities (Feminist GIS) projects focusing on Dalit massacres and feminist geography.

Questions

Based on the gaps identified above, the following are the primary and secondary research questions of this study.

3. The primary research question is regarding the relations among space, caste, and gender in Dalit massacres. For this we proceed with the hypothesis that there exists a relation among space, caste, and gender in Dalit massacres which in turn determines the gendered experiences of the survivors, especially that of women. Hence, we suggest that space should also be considered as an intersectional category while trying to understand the socio-cultural identity of Dalit women ("intersectionality" of Crenshaw, 1989).

4. In order to explore the above question, we have to locate the female narratives of Dalit massacre from fictional and non-fictional sources. Hence, the secondary research question becomes "Where are the female fictional and historical representations of Dalit massacres located (before, during and post the massacres) and how do their experiences differ from that of the men based on their spatial identity?"

Objectives

In accordance with the research questions stated, the primary objective of this study is:

5. to understand the relations among space, caste, and gender (female) in Dalit massacres.

This is achieved through a comprehensive study of the real and fictional narratives on the Kilvenmani massacre (1968) and the Marichjhapi massacre (1979) respectively.

6. to develop and apply a mixed methodology that is a combination of feminist geocriticism (qualitative) and digital cartography (quantitative) that can effectively reveal the space, caste, and gender relations in Dalit massacres.

7. to compare the selected Dalit massacres and to understand the similarities and differences in the experiences of the female survivors using the Kilvenmani massacre (1968) and the Marichjhapi massacre (1979) as case studies.

8. to foreground female narratives of selected Dalit massacres in India using digital cartography.

   This study uses technology to foreground the Dalit women of the selected massacres which consists of developing a spatial database and mapping the historical representations and fictional survivors of the massacres from different sources. The study aims to negate the historical erasures of Dalit female narratives by employing digital methods, focusing on the Kilvenmani Massacre (1968) and the Marichjhapi Massacre (1979) as case studies.

The secondary objective is:

3. to contribute to the existing Dalit scholarship by theorizing on the field of Dalit massacres. The study proposes a definition, legal and theoretical framework for understanding and addressing Dalit massacres in India. Through this we hope to initiate discussions and policy recommendations on the currently neglected field of Dalit massacres in India.

4. to develop the first open-access spatial archive of the historical and fictional female survivors of the selected Dalit massacres together with educational resources for Dalit massacres. This can serve as a prototype for similar (Indian) feminist GIS projects in the future.

1.5 Research Methodology – Feminist Geocriticism and Digital Cartography

1.5.1 Developing and Applying a Mixed Methodology – A Literature Review

Time and space are two concepts that have been subjected to extensive criticism both in literature and philosophy. In literature, positioning of characters at a particular time and space contribute not only to the understanding of the setting but also to the interplay of deeper concepts of force, power, and knowledge. *Chronotope* (1983) of Bakhtin analysed the relationship between time and space, Henri Lefebvre (1974) theorized a tripartite production of space whereas Foucault explored the relationship between Space, Power, and Knowledge (Crampton and Elden 2007) along with the concept of *heterotopia* (Foucault 1971). The "Spatial Turn" (Soja 2011) in Humanities, and Soja's notion of a *third space* (1996) that combine the real and the fictional spaces emphasise the idea that the space we live in is being constantly (re)produced, changed, or imagined through the interplay of social practices, technologies, and ideologies. In Soja's view, the spatial paradigm shift represents a "master turn," that is, a major transformation of scholarship in which spatial imagination and the geographical approach are replacing the framework of historicism (Juvan 2015). The spatial turn thus, shifted the focus of research solely to space, which in literature could be analysed using maps.

Geocritical approaches recently put forth by Bertrand Westphal (2007) and Robert Tally (2008) draws inspiration from the spatial turn and stresses the importance of space in literary research. Tally who coined the term "geocriticism" initially focused on literary geography and the relation between the real and literary or imaginary spaces. For him geocriticism is to literature what "geophilosophy" is to philosophy (Tally 2011). It focuses on how the spatial critical theory which he termed "cartographics" could be used for the analytical criticism of literature i.e., geocriticism. It also helps to see how narratives represented and shaped socio-cultural spaces (literary cartography). Tally analysed Herman Melville's mapping of real and fictional spaces of his world in this manner. Tally is more interested in mapping or cartography as a means to geocritically analyse the real and imaginary spaces in literature.

Westphal (2007), rather than focusing only on a particular literary narrative or location entirely, looked at geocriticism as reading literature with a heightened sensitivity to spatial relations. He turned from an author oriented or egocentric interpretation to emphasise the place itself centring the enquiry on "earth writing" (geocentric) or geography associated with that locale. Westphal maintained that geocritics would begin by locating the place (geocentric) in an attempt to form an archive or corpus of literary and cultural representations of the place (Westphal 2007). In this approach the multifaceted dimensions of locations come into focus through a variety of lenses and perspectives thereby reducing the interference of the personal bias of the author in spatial interpretations. It is a multifocal and dialectical method according to Westphal, in which the meanings of a particular place emerge from the multiple perspectives of those representing it.

In his foreword to *Geocritical Explorations: Space, Place, and Mapping in Literary and Cultural Studies* (Tally 2011), Westphal

defines geocriticism as "an approach whose purpose is to explore some of the interstices that until recent times were blank spaces for literary studies". Both Westphal and Tally sees the method and theory to be in its nascent stage. Yet geocriticism becomes an exception against the criticism of the theory being Eurocentric as Westphal says, "geocriticism entertains a close relationship to most minority discourses: Deleuze and of course postcolonial theory, gender studies and whatnot" (Tally 2011). Postcolonial studies for instance, utilise spatial metaphors for literary analysis and "focus(es) on issues of boundary-making, conquest, delimitation, demarcation and naming" indicating "that geography and cartography" (Frayn 2017) and geocriticism becomes an element in postcolonial studies. Undertaking a geocritical approach along with cartography in postcolonial studies helps in identifying the missing narrative spaces pertaining to a particular location.

Westphal (2007) outlines the major points of geocriticism in his above-mentioned foreword as a geo-centered rather than an ego-centered approach that is multifocal (focuses on different narratives), polysensorial (includes sound, smell, taste and textures of a place) and follows a spatiotemporal scheme i.e., locates a place in a temporal depth in order to analyse multi-layered identities and the temporal variability of heterogenous spaces. Geocriticism therefore focuses on both space and the geographical facets of narratives. The three fundamental concepts outlined by Westphal: spatiotemporality, transgressivity and referentiality are the backbone of the theory. However, both Westphal and Tally reiterates the idea that geocriticism is a developing theory that needs further exploration, examination, and expansion by researchers of spatial humanities. In short geocriticism "may be used to ask new questions, to read differently, to engage with other disciplinary methods, and to interpret the ways that we make sense of our own spaces, of our own mappings" (Tally 2011). Juvan

(2015) appreciates the geocentric, polysensorial approach ("cognitive and bodily experience of a place") of Westphal in having the potential to emerge as a trans discipline of its own. This is in contrast to the earlier spatial humanities research methodologies that were both ego-centric and literature specific (how a writer represents a place or an environment) in its analysis.

Digital Cartography

Digital Cartography refers to the process of creating critical/analytical maps using digital technology and ranges from simple google maps to complicated mapping software such as Geographic Information System or GIS (QGIS - Quantum Geographic Information System or ArcGIS). In literary mapping, digital cartography helps to visualise: the locations and movements of authors in real life; the real and fictional characters in narratives; and also, according to Joliveau (2009), to make connects between real and fictional spaces by mapping. It helps to apply and visualise the geocritical approach. Digital maps created using GIS have the potential to fully utilise the multifocality and polysensorial techniques of geocriticism by combining the spatial data from different medium – literary texts, images, sounds, films, and media reports among others, thereby suggesting new ways in reading and analysing space and place. It also becomes possible to identify gaps in spatial representations (like from a feminist perspective) and to compare and contrast the patterns of representation of the same space across different media and different time that may not be revealed using traditional Humanities research methods. Despite acting as visualisation tools, the digital maps themselves become a metadata upon which further spatio-temporal research becomes possible resulting in the expansion of the existing theories in humanities or even in the creation of new theories. Digital cartography thereby fit into the conditions and characteristics of the

geocritical theoretical and methodological framework facilitating a multimodal and interdisciplinary spatial research of the research topic in question.

Feminist Geographic Information Science (FGIS)

Feminist Geographic Information Science (FGIS) is evolving with new practitioners from digital and critical cartography (Kwan 2002a and 2002b; Pavlovskaya 2009; McLafferty 2002) theorising and expanding the field. Feminist geographers use FGIS as a tool to subvert the existing patriarchal theories and methodologies associated with map-making. They used FGIS to visualise, document and analyse the gendered experiences of women at a micro-level (at home or in their everyday lives) and at a macro-level (in institutions especially workplace). Some prominent FGIS practitioners whose works are relevant to this study are outlined here. Kwan (2002a; 2002b) is one of the pioneering figures who advocated for utilising GIS in quantitative (and qualitative) feminist geographical research. She "calls for the engagement of feminist geographers in resisting dominant GIS practices and in reimagining alternative practices that are congenial to feminist epistemologies and politics" (Kwan 2002a, p. 271). She traces the gaps in GIS research during the 1990s highlighting its failure to look at the intersections between feminism and GIS and proposes the use of mixed methodologies (combination of qualitative and quantitative methods) for FGIS research. This is achieved by revisiting and critiquing the earlier assessment of GIS as a positivist, masculinist and surveillance visualisation technology whose user experience is determined by an individual's gender and cultural identity (Kwan 2002a). Kwan developed dedicated GIS algorithms specific to her research requirements that are not readily available in GIS packages. She believed in 'feminist visualisation', i.e., using GIS in accordance with feminist epistemologies and politics, as a subversive practice

(Kwan 2002b). She used GIS to visualise data gathered from the personal diaries of women and commercial databases to understand the space-time experience of women in urban landscapes by tracing their lived paths (Kwan 2002b). Kwan has also mapped the experiences of urban space by American Muslim women after 9/11 (Kwan 2002a).

D'Ignazio and Klein (2016) expands on the scope of feminist data visualisation to influence the information design process and its outputs. Rethinking binaries, embracing pluralism, examining power and aspiring to empowerment, considering context, legitimising embodiment and affect and making the labour visible in the design process and output are the six principles for feminist data visualisation. Marianna Pavlovskaya is another key figure in the field of feminist GIS (Pavlovskaya and Martin 2007). She traces the history of intersection between feminism (in terms of women's participation in map-making and GIS) and GIS to foreground the potential of FGIS techniques to disrupt existing patriarchal tools of spatial analysis and visualisation (Pavlovskaya and Martin 2007). Pavlovskaya looks at the historical technological exclusion of women and other minority groups and reiterates Donna Harraway's notion that the feminists should use technology creatively rather than discarding them. While presenting the transition of women from being mapping objects to mapping subjects, Pavlovskaya also highlights the risks involved in embracing GIS as it could also be used as a surveillance tool. This is overcome by creating and promoting 'feminist cartographies' which comprise of both women within and outside of geography, utilising cartographic techniques to create "new non-hierarchical and nonexploitative spaces" (Pavlovskaya 2009). While Kwan focused on the everyday gendered experiences, Pavlovskaya used GIS visualisation to analyse the class and gendered experience of Moscow households before and after the Soviet downfall (Pavlovskaya 2004). She combined qualitative

interviewing with GIS to understand the dynamics of local urban change resulting from privatisation.

McLafferty's (2002) research on the other hand focuses on the use of GIS in gendered community issues. On request of the grass-roots women activists, she used GIS to support women's activism against breast cancer in Long Island, New York. The work was later supported by the U.S. government and can be seen as an example of shifting 'knowledge, context, and power – concepts that are seminal to feminist enquiries' to women in GIS. She refers to this shift resulting in feminist visualisation as the "feminization of GIS" (McLafferty 2005). This feminization results in reflexivity, an important concept in feminism and critical GIS, that focuses on giving back and supporting the community under study. While highlighting the recent use of GIS in improving the living conditions of women, McLafferty also focuses on the feminist critique of technology. One such example is 'geoslavery' or the use of technology for surveillance to keep "women in place".

Feminist Geography

In *Geography and Gender (1984): Women and Geography Study Group*, Hanson (1984), defines feminist geography as "a geography which explicitly takes into account the socially created gender structure of society". Feminist Geographies and associated theories put forth by Nelson and Seage (2008), Foord and Gregson (1986), aim to incorporate the intersections of race, class, ability, and sexuality into the study of geography (or space). Feminist geographers initially reclaimed the cartographic spaces by highlighting the contribution of women travel writers, women who inherited cartography related business (Hudson and Ritzlin 2000), thereby indirectly affecting the geographical imaginations of generations. Feminist geography like geocriticism is a comparatively new and

emerging multidisciplinary field of spatio-temporal (geographical) analysis that derives inspiration from feminist, Marxist, and socialist theoretical debates. "Emphasis on the politics of knowledge and the intersectionality of multiple oppressions and identities invigorated feminist geography by providing a wide array of new theoretical and methodological tools for feminist geographical work" (Nelson and Seager 2008).

The initial attempts of the feminist geographers were to "make women visible" (Tivers, 1978) in geographical studies (which is still an ongoing project) both in the academic field as objects of analysis and as subjects of analysis. This included mapping the geographical spaces occupied by women and drawing the relation between their spatial orientation and power structures. Women were often confined to domestic spaces thereby holding lesser socio-economic power. Such a spatial analysis enabled the visualisation of the complex relationship among gender roles, power structures and knowledge production (Crampton and Elden 2007) which could now be plotted using interactive digital maps.

As discussed in the previous section, geocriticism, digital cartography and feminist geography intersect in a number of ways that facilitate a new methodology of using digital cartography in feminist geocriticism. Geocriticism is an emerging spatial theory that needs further expansion and applying it to feminism and gender research unravels the importance of space in the reproduction and propagation of socio-cultural identity. Hence it should be emphasized here that feminism and geocriticism are theories in progress and should not be viewed as static methods of theorising. Amy D. Wells (2017) draws the parallels between geocriticism and gender (feminist) studies based on their pluralistic character i.e., both geocriticism and feminist theories embrace multiplicity. The feminist theory is constantly

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expanding to include the different intersectional experiences of women (identarian) and geocriticism is a multimodal and polysensorial spatial analytical method. This also poses a question whether place should become a new critical intersectional category in addition to race, class, caste and gender. Therefore, combining both the theories result in a new method that throws light on the interconnections between identity and space by analysing its representation in different medium.

Since the feminist geocritical theory is still in its developing stage different scholars interpret and apply the theory in a different way. Wells (2017) defines feminist geocriticism which she terms "geo-*parler femme*" as a theory "which analyses how geography can function as one of the codes used to create a female literary language". Wrede (2015) adds that feminist geocritics reads space as multiple, shifting and characterised by "difference". Feminist geocriticism in the context of this study, in addition to the above, pays attention to the physical/historical/cultural/political location of Dalit women of selected Indian massacres and their representation in various narratives which is later visualised using digital cartography. Locating the Dalit women in order to track the exploitation that they face in a specific place and analysing how the place that they occupy contribute to their (different) experiences based on their intersectional identity forms a major part of this study. The use of digital maps in feminist geocriticism enables researchers to visualise the patterns of locations and movements of Dalit women of the selected massacres on a single map (or space) and to analyse and theorise on the same.

The research gap in GIS based 'gender studies' or feminist geography-based research in India is rightly pointed out by Saraswati Raju and Kuntala Lahiri-Dutt the editors of *Doing Gender, Doing Geography: Emerging Research in India* (Raju and Lahiri-Dutt 2010). They claim the book to be "the first ever publication in India on the

geography of G\gender". Raju points out that there are institutional and structural reasons for the lack of gender concerns in academic geography in India. This gap existing in Indian academia with regard to the absence of utilising theoretical and methodological potential of geography in Humanities and Social Sciences research, is also evident in the fact that very few universities in the country offer a course in human geography (Batra 2012). The scarce research done on feminist geographies in India as seen in Raju and Lahiri-Dutt's (2010) collected works (Tanusree Paul's study of the relationship between public spaces and mundane life in Kolkata and Taneesha Devi's study on the 'private' and 'public' spaces occupied by upper-middle-class women professionals in Delhi) concentrate on the urban and upper/middle class women failing to include the 'others' belonging to lower caste and from rural spaces.

Feminist geographies and associated theories which aim to incorporate intersections of gender, race, class, ability, and sexuality into the study of geography is significant in the Indian scenario where caste also determines the geographical location of women. Maps are also seldom used to understand postcolonial feminist identity in literature (and other art forms) in India and this highlights the need for the proposal of 'feminist geocriticism' using digital cartographic tools such as GIS to study the same. This study proposes "feminist geocriticism" as a methodology by which the intersection of cartography and literary studies could be effectively utilised to identify and analyse the relations among gender, caste, and space in selected Dalit massacres of independent India.

Feminist geocriticism, a combination of feminism and geocriticism is adopted as it is an efficient methodology to make the invisible Dalit women and their narratives visible. While geocriticism focuses on reading texts based on the representation of space or a

particular place (real and imaginary) in multi-modal narratives, feminist theory gives importance to reading texts based on gender (especially female) and its representation. Combining the two theories results in a new critical theory, feminist geocriticism, that allows for the reading of available narratives on the selected massacres for this study by locating the place or site of massacres along with the positioning of women in these places or sites of action. Such a reading helps to understand the presence of female geographies in India. This methodology also helps to comprehend the interplay of Foucault's notion of space, power, and knowledge with respect to gender and caste-based identity. Feminist geocriticism therefore adopts a multimodal, polysensorial approach towards identifying the female experience (Dalit women in this context), in different forms of art by locating them on the historical place or space of action (which is the place of the massacres chosen for the study). It offers a different narrative voice to the "other" in their sites of action, who are otherwise ignored by the mainstream historical and fictional narratives. Locating the writer, reader, characters, and action using feminist geocriticism becomes easier to visualise using digital cartographic techniques, especially GIS, that caters to the principles of feminism and geocriticism. Both feminist geocriticism and digital cartography that traces feminist and casteist geographies therefore becomes intersecting areas that this study incorporates while analysing the female experiences of selected Dalit massacres across the country.

1.5.2 Methodology – Feminist Geocriticism and Digital Cartography

Feminist Geocritical GIS or Feminist Geocriticism and Digital Cartography in the context of this study integrates feminist geocritical techniques with GIS based digital cartographical method to understand the relation between gender and space especially from a caste-

perspective. This is a mixed methodology as it analyses both quantitative data (using feminist geocriticism) as well as qualitative data (using digital cartography). Following Westphal's practice of geocriticism the study begins by locating the place (geocentric) in an attempt to form an archive or corpus of literary and cultural representations of the place (Westphal 2007). After the creation of a corpus, a feminist geocritical pattern of identifying the women in these narratives on the places under study is conducted which is later plotted on a digital map. Identifying the real and fictional intersectional space will throw light on the similarities and differences in the portrayal of Dalit female experiences in various narratives. The final interactive mapping visualization contains information about the identified women in multimedia (images, sound, videos etc.,) along with their narratives thereby serving as a platform to organize and archive the same. The aim of this study is to make use of Feminist Geocritical theory to negate the absence of female narratives in Dalit massacres of India by placing them against the spaces that they occupy.
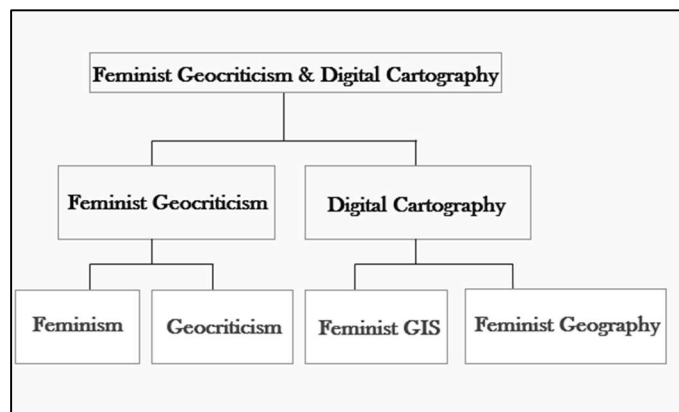
Figure 2: Methodology Workflow

This method is also similar to triangulation i.e., collecting data sources from different streams to check/verify the narratives. Digital Cartography is used as a tool to visualize the invisible females and trace patterns otherwise not recognized through non-digital analysis

such as the existence of a "Third Space" (Soja 1996) or hybrid space where the real and the fictional spaces occupied by the Dalit women (real and fictional) coexist (similar to Edward Said's notion of "imagined geographies"). The data visualisation thus generated could be used to identify the changing landscapes and culture resulting in shifting positions of space, power and knowledge and its effects on the identity of the Dalit women. We studied the digital cartography generated to see the similarities and differences in the experience of Dalit women, especially with reference to space, caste and gender, of the selected massacres across the country and to arrive at definitive conclusions based on the visualisation. The digital cartography will also help to study/visualise the location and movements of women in the massacres both in individual massacres and in comparison.

In summary, geocriticism, digital cartography, and feminist geography intersect to offer a new methodology for exploring identity and space. Both geocriticism and feminist theory are evolving, pluralistic frameworks — geocriticism through its multimodal spatial analysis, and feminism through its inclusion of intersectional identities. As Amy D. Wells (2017) observes, their shared openness invites new critical categories, such as place, alongside race, class, caste, and gender. Together, they reveal how space shapes socio-cultural identities across various media. In this study, feminist geocriticism therefore focuses on the physical, historical, cultural, and political locations of Dalit women in selected Indian massacres and their representation across narratives, which is later visualised and analysed through digital cartography. A key aim is to trace how place shapes the specific forms of exploitation Dalit women face during massacres, based on their intersectional identities. Digital mapping allows for the visualisation of their locations and movements, enabling spatial analysis and theorisation within a single mapped framework.

This study proposes feminist geocriticism and digital cartography — a methodology that combines digital maps with literary analysis—to examine the relationships between gender, caste, and space in selected Dalit massacres in post-independence India. The integration of qualitative (feminist geocriticism) and quantitative methods (digital cartography) enhances the analysis by allowing each approach to support, fill the gaps and enrich the insights of the other. Feminist geocriticism, which merges feminist theory and geocriticism, is employed in this study to foreground the often-invisible narratives of Dalit women. While geocriticism examines representations of space in texts, feminism focuses on gendered perspectives. Their combination enables a spatial reading of selected Dalit massacre narratives, highlighting how place and cultural identities (of caste and gender) intersect. Digital mapping further complements feminist geocritical analysis by foregrounding marginalised voices and offering a counter-narrative to dominant spatial representations. The mixed methodology helps create a more well-rounded and deeper understanding of the the space, caste and gender relations in Dalit massacres. Close reading the texts using feminist geocriticism offered depth, context, and meaning whereas digital cartography offered measurable evidence in terms of a spatial database and spatial patterns. Together, they validate and reinforce each other's findings, leading to more robust conclusions and form the core methodology for this study.

Steps in Methodology

The two massacres selected namely the Kilvenmani massacre of Tamil Nadu (1968) and the Marichjhapi massacre of West Bengal (1979) are the prominent Dalit massacres from two successive decades (1960-1980) of independent India. The selected events are set against historically relevant spaces (Kilvenmani and Marichjhapi) and action

(displacement of Dalit people, Dalit refugees) thereby facilitating analysis of the historiography of the space as well. The place of the massacre is first identified followed by the identification of narratives available and suited for the study. In this approach the multifaceted and dialectical dimensions of the place are focused thereby reducing the interference of the personal bias of authors in spatial interpretations (geocentrical rather than egocentrical approach). This study makes use of both English fictional and non-fictional narratives on the massacres.
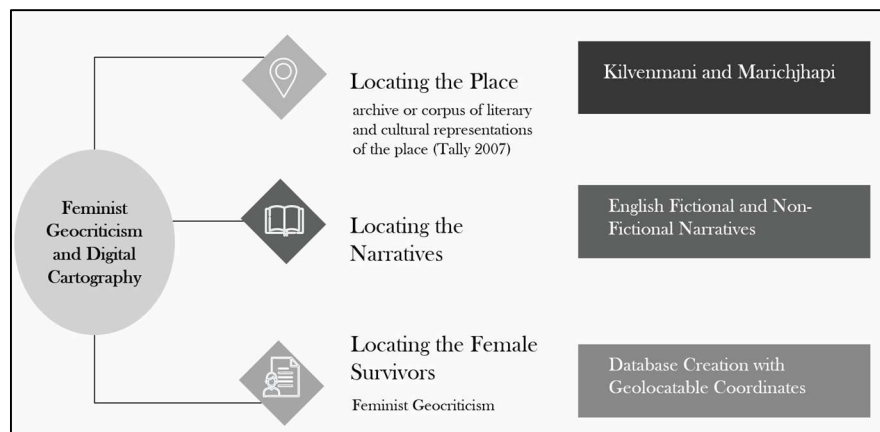
Figure 3: Steps in Methodology

The next process is a feminist geocritical pattern of identifying the women in the selected narratives on the massacres. A database of the historical representations and fictional women of the selected massacres is created which is also utilized for the cartographic visualization. The database contains the real survivors of the massacres identified from various sources like online newspaper reports, non-fictional works like oral history, research articles, along with their geographic coordinates (location during the massacre or before it) and other relevant details. The fictional women of the database are identified from selected literary and visual narratives and the same is geocoded and utilized for mapping to understand the spaces where the real and the fictional women intersect. The data on the survivors were manually scraped from their respective sources.

The database thus created is further used for cartographic visualization. The steps involved in mapping are: manual geoparsing (locating the survivors within their real places from different sources, through the processes mentioned previously), geocoding the data i.e., assigning a location to the parsed data (the coordinates for the places were obtained from Google maps) and lastly georectifying historical maps is done (through QGIS) to address the temporal concerns (Kretzschmar 2013). The maps thus created when embedded in a website serves as a spatial archive with interactive visualisation that allows the readers to "pose new questions about the visualization of multivariable spatial data and might lead to some new insights. But above all, it also put users in the position to use the tool in ways and for purposes that we have not envisioned yet." (Lucchesi 2019). The analysis of the data thus mapped are utilized to confirm the hypothesis of the relation among caste, space, and gender in Dalit massacres. Besides a detailed analysis of each of the massacres selected, a comparative analysis of the Dalit massacres is also conducted. The comparative analysis of the Dalit women in the selected massacres located in different spaces and time through digital cartography allows the identification of the postcolonial "differences" and similarities in their experiences that contribute to their socio-cultural identity.

The selected massacres are compared using comparative literary, historical and cultural theories, the methodology used is elaborated in Chapter 4 of the thesis. The digital maps on the massacres are compiled and published in an open-access spatial archive. We define geo-spatial archives in DH as, 'open-access DH projects that connect historical, narrative and or textual materials with geospatial coordinates for long-term preservation. The project then visualizes the materials to physical place/s using an interactive digital map which in turn serve as a geo-spatial archive of the materials that can facilitate further analysis'. This archive is created using ArcGIS

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online, the methodology of which is elaborated in Chapter 5. The archive consists of a main map featuring the major Dalit massacres of Independent India as the base map with interactive spatial hypertextual links to each massacre that is studied in detail.

1.6 Relevance of Methodology/Significance of the study: Why Study Kilvenmani, and Marichjhapi Massacres using Feminist Geocriticism and Digital Cartography?

The study begins by selecting two prominent massacres from each decade after Indian independence – the Kilvenmani massacre (1968) and the Marichjhapi massacre (1979). These are events selected for the study as they are less researched and are often associated with a forgotten past. The caste fights and Dalit killings involved in the events even if read and researched, are often not analyzed from a feminist perspective with an emphasis on the female survivors and their spatial location. The women of the massacres were exploited based on their socio-political, cultural identity and caste-based physical location. Both upper caste and lower caste women were exploited though the experience of the latter were worse. The role of the relation between the spatial location of the survivors and the intensity of exploitation suggests that space should be considered as an intersectional category in the identity of the Dalit women. Such spatial exploitation was also associated with the then existing land and land laws. The absence of translations of regional literature also makes the struggles of the Dalits invisible. Yet even if the available literature gets translated, the female experiences during the massacres are often limited to incidents of rape alone thereby ignoring other associated physical and psychological traumas. The use of rape as a political weapon against the minorities are often researched extensively especially in partition studies were Urvashi Butalia (2017) states, "[i]t is now widely known that sexual violence happened on a mass scale during Partition, and nearly a

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hundred thousand women were believed to have been abducted, raped, sometimes sold into prostitution, sometimes forcibly married" (pp xvii).

A feminist geocritical approach enables the study to look at how the spatial, gender, and caste identity of the women contributed to their experiences of the body (often compared to land) and mind. The intricate relations between the body of females and land and how both bear the traumatic aftermath of the massacres will be revealed in a feminist geocritical reading of the multiple texts on the events selected. Both feminism and geocriticism are theories that focuses on plurality and are therefore complementary theories. Feminist geocriticism in the context of this study, examines the postcolonial intersectional feminist identity by locating them within the multifocal, geo-centered, and polysensorial (both cognitive and bodily experience of a place) analysis of the utilization of place in selected literary and visual narratives. Applying feminist theory to geocriticism helps in asking questions that investigate how spaces and places are perceived, represented, and ultimately used in the narratives from gendered perspective. The importance of space in the reproduction and propagation of socio-cultural identity gets explored here. Feminist geocriticism also explores common tropes in the selected events such as the portrayal of the female body as the land/war zone; the response of the female survivors to spaces around them with respect to the changes in their current experiences and eventually the question as to whether they become the spaces that they inhabit.

GIS or Geographic Information system is a complex tool that maps geospaces using a combination of attribute (tabular) and spatial data called 'layer'. The tool is particularly useful in feminist geocriticism as it allows the visualisation of different layers (historical, cultural, textual and political) in a single map. It also facilitates the

manipulation of spatial data according to the research requirements. Yet the tool has several limitations and a long history of female exclusion which also makes it a challenge to use the tool in feminist researches. At present with the evolution of feminist geographies women have started to reclaim their positions in cartographic and GIS spaces. Female academicians have realised the potential and the need to utilise GIS to visualise and "factually" represent data of feminist research (Pavlovskaya and Martin, 2007).

Using GIS in feminist geocriticism enables the visualisation of the data collected on the women. For instance, on mapping the women of Kilevenmani massacre, it becomes possible to add different layers containing the real and fictional women at different geographic locations set against the historical/political/cultural geographies. GIS accommodates the principles of feminist geocriticism like plurality or multimodal and polysensorial representation of space. As a result, the data on the females in the form of images, video, text, sounds, among others, obtained from various narratives could be plotted on a single map. Digital cartographic techniques therefore enable both the application and visualization of feminist geocriticism by locating the survivors in the places of oppression. Such a visualization will also help in developing new ways in reading space by tracing the patterns of intersection of real and fiction female survivors (if any). The interactive maps created will also act as a spatial archive of metadata on the Dalit women of selected massacres.

1.7 Ethical considerations in researching and mapping sensitive topics.

We recognise and acknowledge the possible hazard involved in mapping the female survivors in the spatial archive which might render them more vulnerable therefore every aspect of their identity will be concealed in the archive and the access to the archive will be

monitored. We aim to identify both the direct and indirect identifiers which will be limited, re-categorised, or aggregated, replaced with a pseudonym or redacted depending on what seems most suitable for the data anonymisation.

1.8 Chapter Overview

1.8.1 Chapter 1

The introduction places Dalits within the historical context of the caste system and its practices. The socio-cultural marginalization and caste-based spatial segregation of the Dalits are highlighted through a literature review of the existing Dalit scholarship on caste and space. It then explores the underlying causes of Dalit massacres by examining how the rise of Dalit activism, literature, and theory empowered Dalits to assert their rights and protest against the discriminatory practices of the caste system. The role of women in activism, literature, and theory, and how their contributions have been marginalized in history, is also explored in detail followed by the definition and differentiation between Dalit atrocities and massacres. The causal factors, perpetrators, repercussions and prevention strategies of atrocities and massacres are analysed together with an introduction to existing legal and theoretical frameworks on both phenomena. The space, caste, and gender relations in Dalit massacres is then analysed before proceeding to the background, methodology, need for this study on the female survivors of selected Dalit massacres in India.

1.8.2 Chapter 2: Gendered Spaces of Caste: Case Study I – the Kilvenmani Massacre (1968)

This chapter presents the first case study – the Kilvenmani massacre (1968), to understand the space, caste and gender relations of

Dalit massacres. The fictional and historical portrayals of female survivors are analysed using feminist geocriticism and digital cartography. The chapter begins with an introduction to the background of the massacre with the events categorised as occurring before, during and after the massacre. The causal factors are classified as economic, political and cultural with a subsequent review of the academic scholarship on the massacre to highlight the gaps in understanding the Dalit female experiences of the massacre. The chapter argues for a polycentric, multifocal, feminist geocentric and digital cartographic approach that considers space as an intersectional factor influencing the gendered experiences of the female survivors by scrutinizing English fictional and non-fictional texts. *Kuruthipunal/The River of Blood/Chorapuzha* (1978), *The Gypsy Goddess* (2014) and *Heat* (2019) and Tamil films like *Kann Sivanthal Mann Sivakum* (When Eyes Turn Red, the Soil Will Too, 1983), *Aravindhan* (1997), *Virumaandi* (2004), and *Asuran* (Demon) (2019) are the fictional narratives studied. The non-fictional narratives include the essay collection *Haunted by Fire: Essays on Caste, Class, Exploitation and Emancipation* (2016), the documentary *Ramayyahvin Kudisai* (The Ramayya's Hut, 2005) and English online newspaper reports on the massacre (up to 2021).

Database of the female survivors – fictional and historical representations, authors, and feminist activists are created through manual geoparsing and later digitally mapped using tools like QGIS and ArcGIS Online after geocoding the data. Feminist geocriticism is utilised for theoretical and qualitative analysis and digital cartography for the quantitative and visual analysis of spatial data. The results and discussions are divided into three major sections. The first section identifies fictional and non-fictional survivors in their social and physical spaces through close readings. The gendered identities, roles, power dynamics of female survivors, and references to the massacre

are examined in relation to caste and space in the narratives. The next section thematically compares the experiences of the fictional and historical survivors. The use of real and fictional settings and the creation of 'gendered spaces of caste' are analysed to understand the intersections of space, caste and gender in Dalit massacres. The final section explores additional literature, such as land laws, court orders, letters, and petitions, along with the space, caste, and gender of authors, feminist activists, and organizations, to deepen understanding of gendered experiences through feminist geocritical lens of multifocality.

The chapter confirms the hypothesis of the thesis about the existence of a relation among caste, gender and spatial location in Dalit massacres and concludes with the following inferences: 1) the caste identity of being a Dalit, determines the spatial location of the female survivors which in turn render them more susceptible to gender and caste-based violence during the massacres, 2) the female experiences of the massacre – real, fiction, upper caste and lower caste are marked by a 'politics of difference' and the survivors are still awaiting legal justice, 3) mappings reveal the existence of gendered spatial hierarchy or the creation of gendered spaces of caste due to spatial segregation in Tamil Nadu and 4) lack of Dalit feminist narratives of the massacre calls for *Dalit feminitude*, a new political movement and analytical device that uses a combination of lived experience and allyship to advance Dalit feminist anti-caste movements and activism. The chapter ends by offering ways to eliminate caste-based spatial segregation in Indian villages and thereby Dalit massacres, via alterations in social and political spaces and institutional frameworks.

1.8.3 Chapter 3: Fictional and Factual Echoes of Space, Caste and Gender: Case Study II – the Marichjhapi Massacre (1979)

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This chapter on the second case study – the Marichjhapi massacre (1979) follows a structure similar to the previous one, with an introduction to the events occurring before, during and after the massacre; economic, political, ecological and cultural causal factors and a detailed review of the academic scholarship on the massacre. The chapter reiterates the gaps in massacre studies, especially in terms of female fictional and non-fictional representations. It further grounds and supports the hypothesis on the relations among space, caste and gender in Dalit massacres by investigating English fictional and non-fictional texts on the massacre. Fictional texts considered are *The Hungry Tide* (2011) and the semi-fictional documentary photography *Where the Birds Never Sing* (2020). Non-fictional texts include the Oral History *Blood Island* (2019), *Interrogating my Chandal Life – An Autobiography of a Dalit* (2018), *Chap 6: Reconstructing Marichjhapi: From Margins and Memories of Migrant Lives* (2015) and English online newspaper articles (up to the year 2020).

Database on the real and fictional survivors, the camp locations and movement of the refugees and the location of the prominent writers on the massacre are assembled via manual scraping and digitally mapped. The results and discussions of the qualitative feminist geocritical reading and quantitative digital cartographical analysis are presented in three main sections. The first section close reads the settings, female experiences and references to the massacre in the selected fictional and non-fictional texts through the lens of feminist geocriticism and digital cartography. The second section gives a thematic comparative analysis of the portrayal of the fictional and non-fictional survivors along with the creation of binary spaces like gendered spaces of caste and refugee camps as Dalit spaces. Additional literature such as court orders, letters and petitions along with the space, caste, and gender of authors are analysed in the next section to further ground the female experiences of the massacre.

The chapter validates the thesis hypothesis, demonstrating a significant relationship among space, caste and gender in Dalit massacres. The following inferences, drawn from the case study, align with the conclusions presented in the previous chapter: the caste identity, gender and spatial location are interconnected; the Dalit female experiences of the massacre are marked by a 'politics of difference' and they bear the 'triple burden' of caste, class, and gender; the creation of gendered spatial hierarchy or the creation of gendered spaces of caste due to spatial segregation of the Dalit refugees; and the need for a *Dalit feminitude*. The chapter concludes by reiterating the ways to eliminate caste-based spatial segregation in India to prevent large-scale caste-based, and gender-based violence against the Dalits.

1.8.4 Chapter 4: Space, Gender, and Caste: A Comparative Approach to the Kilvenmani and Marichjhapi Massacres Using Feminist Geocriticism and Digital Cartography

This chapter offers a comparative analysis of the fictional and non-fictional female survivors of the Kilvenmani massacre and the Marichjhapi massacre primarily using feminist geocriticism and digital cartography. The fictional and non-fictional sources mentioned in chapter 2 and 3 are compared to understand: 1) the similarities and differences in their experiences before, during, and after the massacres and 2) the underlying intersections of space, caste, and gender in Dalit massacres. The chapter is divided into three main sections. The first section addresses the gaps in comparative studies of female experiences of two Dalit massacres and underscores the importance of this research. This section proposes a comparative analysis grounded in literary, historical, and cultural comparative theoretical frameworks alongside the primary frameworks of feminist geocriticism and digital cartography. This methodology helps in: understanding the narrative techniques and styles used to represent Dalit massacres, to identify the

patterns, mechanisms and dynamics behind complex processes and events (Helder 2015 61) like Dalit massacres and to devise methods and policies to prevent it.

The literary comparative methods utilized in addition to feminist geocriticism are cross-fictionality, and intertextuality. Historical comparison is done through Comparative Historical Analysis (CHA) rooted in causal analysis, analysis of processes that unfold progressively over time and contextualised comparisons of in-depth case studies. Comparative cultural studies are the convergence of comparative literature and cultural studies (Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek 1999) and decodes the representation of cultural identities, like caste, in literary works. To summarise, literary approaches are utilised to understand the fictional and non-fictional narratives whereas historical method facilitate an understanding of the sequence of events before, during, and after the massacre. Comparative cultural approach helps to comprehend the role of cultural institutions and practices like caste discrimination and socio-spatial stratification in Dalit massacres.

The next section compares the sequential events of the two massacres using CHA and comparative cultural analysis. The location of the massacres, causal and cultural factors, and politics of remembrances are contextualised and compared to deduce the impact of caste-based discrimination and spatial segregation in the assertion of Dalit identity and rights, and how this ultimately contributes to massacres. The final section presents the literary and cultural thematic comparisons of the narratives on the Kilvenmani massacre and the Marichjhapi massacre. Female fictional and historical representations, settings, gendered spaces of caste, gender-based violence and additional literature are thematically compared using feminist geocriticism and digital cartography. The narratives are compared using literary theories and techniques like Dalit feminism, use of

myths, authorial style, cross-fictionality and intertextuality. The chapter concludes with the major findings mainly focusing on the similarities and differences in two main aspects: 1). Gender and caste and 2) Space and caste. This chapter contributes to the current Dalit scholarship in India by proposing and applying a methodology to compare the female experiences of two (or more) Dalit massacres in India, using comparative literary, historical and cultural frameworks and aims to initiate research discussions on other lesser-known similar events in independent India.

1.8.5 Chapter 5: Possibilities and Tensions in Creating a Spatial Archive of the Female Survivors of Dalit Massacres in India: "Cartographies of Courage: Fictional Threads, Real Lives"

This chapter outlines the possibilities and tensions in creating a spatial archive of the female survivors of Dalit massacres in India using the example of the *Cartographies of Courage: Fictional Threads, Real Lives* project. This open-access spatial archive is a work in progress and currently maps the fictional and non-fictional survivors of the Kilvenmani massacre and the Marichjhapi massacre. The initial section of the chapter defines and establishes geo-spatial archives in digital humanities before proceeding to the spatial archive that is created as part of this thesis. The next section gives the background to the project – its aims, open accessibility, the different sections like data and ethics, educational resources, reproducibility and analytical study of the Kilvenmani and the Marichjhapi massacres. The methodology used for the creation of the spatial archive including the creation of spatial hypertexts is detailed in the next section. The results and discussion section gives the possibilities and tensions in creating an Indian feminist geospatial archive in DH. The chapter concludes by highlighting the major findings and conclusions, limitations of the spatial archive and future work. This chapter proposes a methodology

for the creation of Indian feminist geospatial projects by outlining the possibilities and tensions encountered during the creation of an open-access spatial archive of female survivors of Dalit massacres in India. The chapter contributes to the current DH and literary scholarship in the sub-continent by offering innovative ways for sharing research that engage both academic communities and the general public.

1.8.6 Chapter 6: Conclusion

The concluding chapter summarises and reflects upon the analysis carried out in the four major chapters of the thesis. It briefly summarises the main research findings of the thesis and discusses its limitations and future scopes. The first section of this chapter proposes a legal and theoretical framework for understanding Dalit massacres in India and highlights the contributions of the thesis. This research contributes to the current Dalit scholarship in India by proposing comparative, legal, theoretical and pedagogical frameworks for understanding female experiences of Dalit massacres in India. The study contributes to the digital humanities endeavours in India by developing an unprecedented open-access spatial archive that can serve as a prototype for future Indian feminist geospatial projects.

Chapter2

**Gendered Spaces of Caste: Case Study I – the Kilvenmani
Massacre (1968)**

*She has never gone to school. She tells you that caste is about having
one set of people to read books, one set of people to be crooks, one set
of people to misbehave, one set of people to slave.*

- Meena Kandasamy, The Gypsy Goddess.

This chapter applies the mixed methodology of feminist
geocriticism and digital cartography to the first case study – the
Kilvenmani massacre (1968) to understand the space, caste and gender
relations in the massacre.

2.1 Introduction

The Kilvenmani massacre eponymously titled after the
Kilvenmani village (also referred to as Venmani, Keezhvenmani,
Kizhavenmani) of Thanjavur district unfolded in December 1968 in
Tamil Nadu (Kanagasabai 2014; Menon 2017). On the night of 25
December 1968, 44 Dalits who sought shelter in a hut to escape the
village fire set by upper caste landlords and their henchmen, were
subjected to arson and death (Sivaraman 1973; Menon 2017). Most of
the deceased were women (18) and children (22) along with a few
elderly people and men (2) (Death of a Mirasdar 1980). The massacre
is often dismissed as a class fight between the landowning upper caste
and the lower caste labourers as the latter had protested for wage
increment in dominant discourses (Omvedt 1986; Sivaraman 1973).
Conversely, there are economic, cultural, and political events, that took
place over the years which eventually culminated in a massacre that is
often hailed as "one of the earliest and most violent crimes in post-
independence India" against the Dalits (Kanagasabai 2014, p. 106).

There are economic, political and cultural reasons behind the massacre. The economic reasons consisted of a demand for a rise in wages by the Dalit labourers. When their demands were ignored by the landlords, the labourers protested by preventing the harvest of the paddy that they had toiled to cultivate. With the green revolution (Omvedt 1986), "fall in agricultural produce and various other economic reasons, the price of paddy shot up, and this led to the Dalit labourers demanding half a litre more of rice" (Kanagasabai 2014, p. 110). This demand by the labourers and their further strike instigated the upper-class landowners, who retaliated by importing outside labour into the village to harvest the paddy (Kanagasabai 2014; Sivaraman 1973). The cultural aspect behind this retaliation by the landowning class, is linked to the caste and landownership patterns that was prevalent in Thanjavur and Tamil Nadu (Sivaraman 1973). The upper caste owned large acres of land in which the lower caste was forced to labour incessantly. When this 'subservient' lower caste labourers referred to as 'pannai adimais' or 'farm servant' (Menon 2017) questioned and demanded their rights, it infuriated the landlords. This instigated them to retaliate with a massacre in an attempt to suppress the mobilisation of the Dalit labourers (Death of a Mirasdar 1980) under the Communist Party of India Marxist (CPIM). This is evident in the statement from the article, Death of a Mirasdar (1980) quoted below,

> The fellow who used to stand in the backyard of my house to talk to me (now) comes straight to the verandha wearing slippers and all. His leader holds a meeting right next door to me and parades the streets with the red flag. These fellows have become lazy and arrogant, thanks to the Communists. They have no fear in them anymore (2115).

The Kilvenmani massacre is therefore an example of Dalit's assertion of fundamental rights and subversion of caste hierarchies leading to massacre.

The political climate of East Thanjavur affected the economic and cultural factors that led to the massacre. The rise of Marxist party, Communist Party of India (Marxist) [CPI(M)] in particular, and consequent unionisation of the labourers during the 1960s sensitised the Dalit labourers about their rights. This prompted them to organise among themselves into labour unions and claim the parts that rightfully belonged to them (Death of a Mirasdar 1980; Menon 2017). The landlords in response, formed the Paddy Producer's Association (PPA) in 1968 (Kanagasabai 2014; Sivaraman 1973). Gopalakrishna Naidu, president of PPA, imported outside labour to counter the demand for an increase in wages. This resulted in a clash between the labourers and the agents of the landlords, killing Pakkirisamy Pillai, an upper caste agent of the landlords (Kanagasabai 2014; Sivaraman 1973). This was the final incident that furthrt led to the massacre by Naidu and his henchmen (Kanagasabai 2014; Sivaraman 1973).The key moments in the massacre are shown in the Figures 4a and 4b.

Key Moments in the Kilvenmani

Event Details

1. 1967, Rise of Marxist Party - Organised Union of Labourers
2. 1968, Paddy Producer's Association formed
3. 1968, Pakkirisami Pillai killed in a clash between the labourers and the outside labourers
4. 25 December, 1968 night - The Kilvenmani Massacre killing 44 Dalits, mostly women and children
5. 1973, Kilvenmani Martyr's Memorial
6. 1975, Main Accused Gopalakrishna Naidu and Others acquitted
7. 14 December, 1980 night, Gopalakrishna Naidu Murdered
8. 1981, Land redistribution Initiated by Feminist Organisations

1. Thanjavur
2. Kilvenmani
3. Kilvenmani
4. Kilvenmani
5. Kilvenmani
6. Madras
7. Irinjiur
8. Kilvenmani
Kilvenmani

Legend
Significant places
Kilvenmani

4(a)

Figure 4: (a) Key Spatial Moments in the Kilvenmani Massacre; (b)
Key Spatial Moments in the Kilvenmani Massacre (close view)

A horrific incident that is consistently cited in most narratives, including newspapers, on the massacre is the torching of Ramayya's Hut (Kanagasabai 2014; Menon 2017). The incident is also documented in *Ramayyahvin Kudisai/The Ramayyan's hut* (Krishnakumar 2005). The labourerss fleeing from the landlords' arson, sought refuge in a 8 ft x 9 ft hut (Kanagasabai, 2014), owned by Ramayyan, the sole Dalit landowner, hoping that his landowning status would protect him and, by extension, them (Manikandan 2017). The henchmen, nevertheless, locked the hut from outside and torched it, with 44 Dalits trapped inside (Kanagasabai 2014).

In fact, it was not just that the children were locked up in a hut and burnt to death, but there is one episode which anybody in Keezhvenmani will tell you again and again — how one of the mothers of a child in a desperate attempt to save the child threw the child outside, hoping that somebody will save the baby, somebody in the mob would have the humanity to save this child. But they basically

chopped the baby into pieces and threw the baby back into the hut and set it on fire (Pawar 2018).

The Dalit, Muniyan, claims to have lodged a complaint around 11.15pm of the same night with the Keezhvelur (Venmani) police station but to no effect (Manikandan 2017). "When the police came it arrested the victims, not the perpetrators" (Sundharabuddhan 2012) and they "framed a very flimsy case; they watered down every testimony and they gave plenty of escape routes for the accused to walk free" (Kandasamy 2015). The Keezhvelur police station, within three miles of Venmani, acknowledged the incident only the next morning (Sivaraman 1973). Consequently, the apathy of the police force who silently complied with the powerful perpetrators also facilitated the massacre (Kanagasabai 2014; Sivaraman 1973). The state is also criticised for its inaction with C.N. Annadurai, the first Dravidian Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, stating: "[p]eople should forget this as they forget a feverish nightmare or a flash of lightning" (Pawar 2018). Naidu, the main perpetrator of the violence was later murdered by the labourers in 1980 in a retaliating strike (Gunjan 2018).

The caste-identity of the victims of the massacre was overlooked until recently by both the mainstream media and academia. The massacre is often dismissed as a class conflict between the landlords and the labourers. But the labourers were all Dalits forced to work under the tyrannous upper caste landlords, who exploited them under the 'Pannaiyal system'. "A pannaiyal (attached labourer) pledged the services of himself, his wife and their children to be born to the landlord until the loan, usually taken for marriage, of about Rs 50 was fully recovered" (Sivaraman 1973). Thus, the labourers were exploited economically and culturally based on their identities – as a labourer and as a Dalit. Caste also determined the location of the Dalits

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in Tamil Nadu, as they were often relegated to the outskirts of the village, referred to as 'Cheri', the Tamil word for 'slum' (Gorringe 2016). Kilvenmani is one such "Harijan cheri" (Death of a Mirasdar 1980). This caste-based spatial segregation of the Dalits further rendered them trackable and vulnerable to caste-based atrocities and violence.

2.2 Background and Significance of the Study

Research on Kilvenmani massacre such as Sivaraman (1973), Gough (1974), Omvedt (1981), Kanagasabai (2014), and Menon (2017), shows a growing interest on the caste and class dimensions of the massacre but its gender and spatial dimensions are left explored. The details regarding the year, number of deaths, and the gender identity of the deceased still remain unclear. However, most sources (newspaper articles and researcher/activists like Sivaraman, 1973) on the massacre cite the death count to be 44, of which the greater number of the victims are women and children. There are both direct and indirect studies on the massacre that focus on different aspects of the massacre. The subsequent sections offer a comprehensive examination of the scarce body of research available on the massacre, highlighting key studies and their findings.

Mythily Sivaraman (1973) is the earliest researcher and activist who has written extensively on the massacre. Her work (Sivaraman 1973) is a comprehensive study of the different verdicts on the massacre – from the lower sessions court verdict to the upper Supreme court – along with a detailed critical analysis of the casteist bias in the verdicts. The paper critiques and attempts to shift the then mainstream print narratives of the massacre from being merely an "agrarian trouble" to that of a caste and class conflict. Kathleen Gough (1974) traces the cultural and political reasons that led to the peasant uprisings throughout the country as, "responses to deprivation of unusually

severe character, always economic, and often also involving physical brutality or ethnic persecution" (1391). This indirect study on the massacre is important in detailing the land ownership and peasant struggles during the colonial period and later, that led to the caste conflicts and massacres. However, the paper only briefly references the massacre as a revolt by "a group of Harijan landless labourers, influenced by the CPI(M), who struck for higher wages in view of the increased production and price inflation brought about by the 'green revolution'" (1391). She also attributes caste as a unifying factor that mobilised the peasants since, "in many cases peasants were able to assemble quickly through the medium of their caste assemblies" (1392).

"Death of a Mirasdar" (1980) is one of the first articles to mention the murder of Gopalakrishna Naidu. The paper explicitly details the caste motives (clashes between Harijan labourers and caste Hindu landlords) behind the massacre as well as the political affiliations of the landlords (Congress) and the labourers (CPIM). Gail Omvedt (1981) refers to the Kilvenmani massacre as the "first of a long series of 'atrocities on Harijans" whereas Jean-Luc Racine and Josiane Racine (1998) mentions the massacre by placing it against the context of Dalit atrocities and struggles in Tamil Nadu. Hugo Gorringe (2006) both misquotes the year of the massacre as 1969 and misinforms that the court verdict was implemented by the state. The paper by Sharma and Nair (2015) contains merely a one-line mention of the massacre whereas Menon (2017) does a deep analytical study of the agrarian struggles in Thanjavur and places the Kilvenmani massacre against multiple contexts such as "agrarian slavery", the rise of the Marxist party, the green revolution, and agrarian struggles. The paper emphasizes the importance of oral histories in archiving memories, "especially of agrarian history and people's movements"

(90) and initiates the process of archiving by recording the narratives from a few survivors.

The most comprehensive and detailed analysis of the massacre to date is provided by Nithila Kanagasabai (2014). This paper analyzes various facets of the massacre considering the pre- and post-event political climate, the role of caste dynamics, ensuing judicial responses, and newspaper coverage. Her work also serves as a resource for understanding the diverse fictional and non-fictional narratives based on the massacre. An overview of films and related materials concerning the massacre is provided, although not extensively. The paper highlights the gap in addressing the gender dimension of the massacre, especially the absence of the narratives by the women who were directly or indirectly connected with the massacre. Kanagasabai (2014) underscores the possibilities in archiving the historiography of the women of the Kilvenmani massacre. Taking a cue from the works of Menon (2017) and Kanagasabai (2014), in this study we are attempting to fill the gap on the female narratives of the massacre by using a hybrid methodology that is a combination of digital cartography and feminist geocriticism. "The passage of time, lack of proper documentation and multiplicity of narratives have buried the incident in mystery and uncertainty" (Kanagasabai 2014), which highlights the importance of addressing and documenting the stories of female survivors that have been overlooked till date.

2.3 Materials: From Text to Data

The study aims to foreground the female survivors of the Kilvenmani massacre, by hypothesizing a relation among space, caste, and gender in massacres and its impact on the female survivors. This is achieved through the analysis of both the English literary and non-literary narratives on the massacre. The study began by collecting materials to form a corpus of works on the Kilvenmani massacre and

the nature of the corpus assembled lead to the adoption of the methodology. The materials gathered as part of this study are diverse, consisting of data compiled (manually scraped) from available online English newspaper reports, English literary texts (both fictional and non-fictional) and research articles on the massacre. The data compiled from the materials is used to create a database of the female survivors of the massacre. Both textual and visual (Tamil) narratives along with the real survivor locations are considered for this study.

The texts are selected based on their direct and indirect references to the massacre. Fictional narratives in English on the Kilvenmani massacre that are considered for this study include the novels: *Kuruthipunal/The River of Blood/Chorapuzha* (1978) by Indira Parthasarathy (fictional), *The Gypsy Goddess* (2014) by Meena Kandasamy (semi-fictional) and *Heat* (2019) by Poomani (fictional). The visual narratives based on or referring to the massacre includes Tamil films like *Kann Sivanthal Mann Sivakum* (When Eyes Turn Red, the Soil Will Too) (1983) directed by Sreedhar Rajan which is an adaptation of *Kuruthipunal*, *Aravindhan* (1997) written and directed by T. Nagarajan, *Virumaandi* (2004), written and directed by Kamal Haasan and *Asuran* (Demon) (2019) written and directed by Vetrimaaran. The non-fictional narratives include the essay collection entitled: *Haunted by Fire: Essays on Caste, Class, Exploitation and Emancipation* (2016) by Mythily Sivaraman and the documentary, *Ramayyahvin Kudisai* (The Ramayya's Hut, 2005) by Bharathi Krishnakumar. The narratives on the massacre are written by authors from different gender (male and female) and spatial locations. This helped in reducing the gender bias and personal bias (cultural and social biases) of the authors who were attached to the place. For example, Meena Kandasamy was personally connected to Kilvenmani whereas Indira Parthasarathy belonged

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to Chennai resulting in the creation of different narratives associated with the site of the massacre.

Apart from the database of the survivors, geodatabases of the prominent writers and feminist activists related to the massacre is also created. Petitions, letters and court orders among other documents on the massacre are consulted and analysed as part of the study to understand the role of caste and gender in legal proceedings. In order to efficiently accommodate the materials thus gathered and analysed we have adopted a mixed/hybrid methodology. Feminist geocriticism is utilised for theoretical and qualitative analysis and digital cartography (tools like QGIS and ArcGIS Online) for the quantitative and visual analysis of spatial data. Key attributes of the quantitative data include name of the survivor, location (latitude and longitude), caste and age (where available). This methodology was adopted to efficiently accommodate the materials collected and to utilize it to recognize the marginalized Dalit women narratives of massacres. The study utilizes tools, maps in this case, that were historically denied to women and used to subjugate them (Pavlovskaya and Martin 2007, p. 586).

Limitations of data: Though there are several novels on the massacre in Tamil (the mother tongue of Tamil Nadu), in this study we are only focusing on the works written in English due to language constraints. This also helps in managing the scope of the study by ensuring that the research remains focused and feasible. The other major Tamil literary works on the massacre that are not included in this study are: 1. poems like *Manusangada* (We are Humans Too) by Inquilab and *Ameen* by Dheetchanya; and 2. novels like *Keezhai Thee* (Fire Underneath) by Pattali and *Sennel* (Red Rice) by Solai Sundaraperumal.

2.4 Results and Discussions: Feminist Geocritical and Digital Cartographic Reading

2.4.1   Space, Caste and Gender in Dalit Massacres – Close Reading Fictional and Non-Fictional Texts

In order to adhere to the paper's scope and ensure a practical approach, this study does not perform a detailed close reading of the texts in their entirety. Instead, the study centres solely on the core themes of gender, space, and caste in the massacre as portrayed in the narratives. The following readings are attempted based on the portrayal of the females and their locations in the selected narratives. From a feminist perspective, the female characters are examined through their gender roles and identities, along with the power dynamics between characters from different social strata (here upper and lower caste). A geocritical reading involves analyzing the roles of space, place, and geography in the narrative, as well as the influence of caste, considering both their physical and metaphorical dimensions. Finally, the feminist geocritical reading of the narratives looks at the gender relations from a spatial context. The analysis is also founded on the major principles of feminist geocriticism (elaborated in the previous chapter) such as: 1) understanding the role of place in shaping the female narratives, 2) looking at space as a multiple, shifting facet that is characterized by 'difference' (Wrede 2015) and 3) utilizing geography as a code to create a female literary language (Wells 2017). For the spatial readings and analysis, the study makes use of digital cartography. In simpler terms we will be looking at the portrayal of gender identities and power dynamics as well as the use of space, place and geography in relation to caste in the selected narratives.

i. Fictional Survivors:

1. *Kuruthipunal/The River of Blood/Chorapuzha* (1978) by Indira Parthasarathy

The novel by Parthasarathy is originally written in Tamil but we have analysed the Malayalam translation of the work, *Chorapuzha* (1978), as the English version (*The River of Blood*) was inaccessible and also due to our language constraints. The settings in the novel vary from Delhi to Thanjavur and Thiruvarur. The massacre takes place towards the end of the novel and is set in Thiruvarur, a real place within the vicinity of the original site of the massacre. In the figure 5(b), the women from *Chorapuzha* cluster around Thiruvarur. The reference to Ramayya's hut is apparent in the descriptions of a similar incident at "Veerayyan's Hut", where mainly women and children are burnt (150). Figures 7 and 8 shows that both the lower caste and the upper caste women are placed in the same space – Thiruvarur – yet the advantage of the latter is the safety offered by their caste identity. This illustrates how women's experiences of the same location can vary significantly based on their intersectional (caste and gender) identity, as analyzed through the lens of feminist geocritical theory.

5(a)
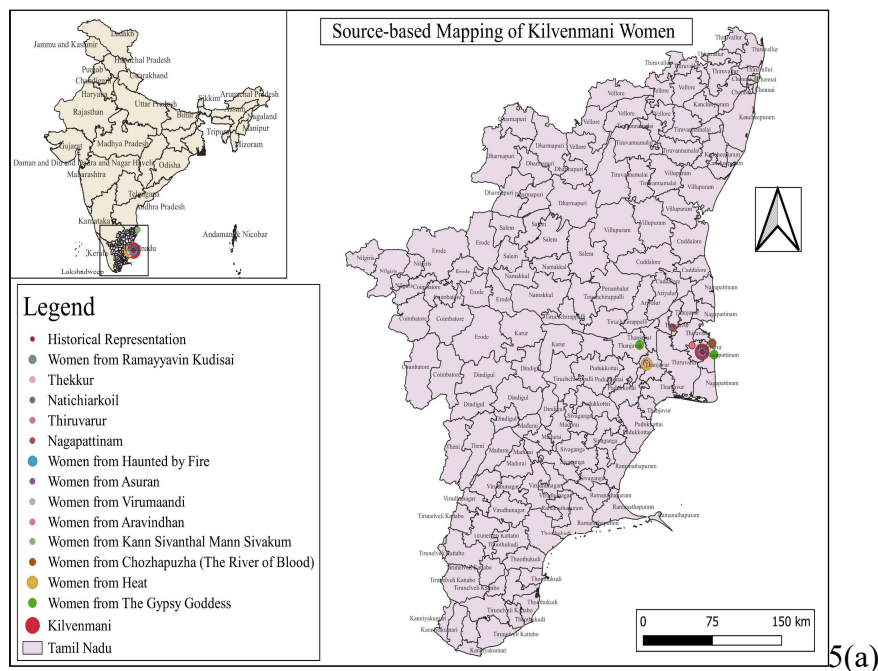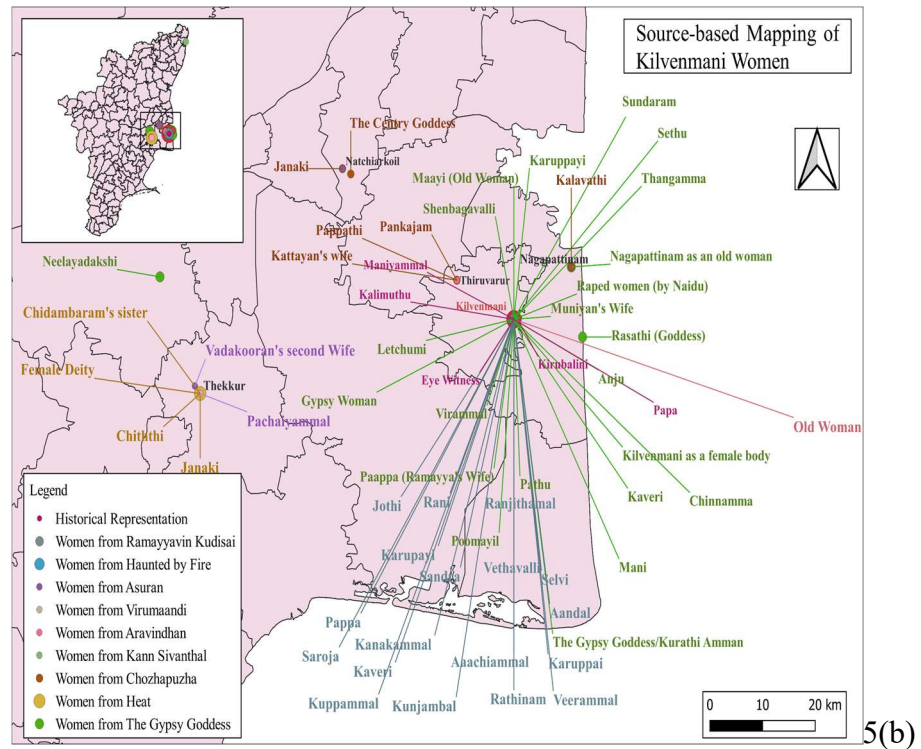
Figure 5: (a) Source-based Mapping of the Women of the Kilvenmani
Massacre; (b) Source-based Mapping (Close-View)

Besides the massacre references, the novel depicts the oppression of both the lower caste woman, Pappathi (Paraya/Pulaya woman, p. 73, 83) and the upper caste woman Pankajam [referred to as a "prey" (87)] by the upper caste men. They are slut-shamed and sexually exploited thereby revealing that the upper-caste women occupy a lower social hierarchical status as compared to both upper-caste and lower-caste men. The order of hierarchy thus becomes: 1. upper-caste men, 2. lower-caste men, 3. upper-caste women and 4. lower caste women. Consequently, upper-caste women are also stripped of the power and agency held by upper-caste men, as they are excluded from having any say in decisions related to the massacre. The upper caste men on the other hand enjoy both caste and gender privileges resulting in the exploitation of the Dalit laborers and the women belonging to any caste. Even the sexual assault of an upper

caste woman, Pappathi, is manipulated and presented by Naidu as a caste-issue (109) when he tries to incite riot by denouncing and humiliating the individuals based on their lower caste status.

The fiction is predominantly written from a male perspective with very few underdeveloped female characters like Pappathi, Kattayan's wife, Pankajam and Kalavathi among others. The novelist gives representation to a diverse set of female characters belonging to different caste hierarchy and social status, as in the lower caste women – Janaki (prostitute), Pappathi, Kattayan's wife, the upper caste woman Pankajam (who is also forced to give sexual favours to the upper caste landlord Naidu) and the mythical character of "The Centry Goddess". The differential experiences of women indicate that a 'homogenization' will lead to inaccurate analysis. But the representation is restricted to caste and there are no attempts to delve deeper into their female psyche.

The men in the novel, even the educated ones, like Shiva, are unconcerned about the oppression of women. A significant change in the narrative is the portrayal of Kannayya Naidu, the landowner responsible for the massacre, as impotent. This portrayal has a land and gender inference as it is this sexual (impotence) and caste frustration (Dalits claiming their rights) that resulted in a massacre that destroyed both the fertile women and the land as well as the fruits of their fertility – i.e., children and crops respectively. Mass killing of women and children is a common technique used in genocide and massacres to prevent the procreation of the victim communities (Hartley 2007, p. 237). There are also explicit references revealing the connections among women, land, land laws and gender connections (115). This narrative illustrates how a man's drive to claim both land and women reflects their objectification as possessions of patriarchal and casteist men.

The novel also refers to the caste-based spatial segregation in Tamil Nadu through the mention of 'Meletheru' (the upper street) as the place where the upper caste and rich people resided as opposed to the unnamed place beyond Meletheru, inhabited by the lower caste agricultural labourers (figure 11). The placement of the mythical character, 'the Centry Goddess', a female deity worshipped by the local people of Thiruvarur, at the boundary of the village also reveals gender, caste, and space relations. The goddess, a mythical entity transcending caste, occupies a liminal space between the upper caste and lower caste women, who are otherwise constrained to their designated roles based on their caste. Overall, despite the author's clear efforts to highlight the nuanced interconnections among caste, space, and gender, the novel lacks a significant female character and provides only a superficial exploration of the female psyche, encompassing both upper-caste and lower-caste women.

2. *The Gypsy Goddess* (2014) by Meena Kandasamy

The semi-fictional novel is set in the actual place of the massacre, Kilvenmani, and most of the incidents takes place within Nagapattinam. The novel is a blend of the historical (real) materials such newspaper reports and court verdicts together with the fictional incidents of the massacre. Meena Kandasamy refers to the massacre by its original name. The author traces the colonial history of the places at the beginning of the novel in order to establish the background to the massacre. She makes use of the mythical character, 'Neelayadakshi' (17), with blue eyes, to symbolize the mixing of colonizers and the indigenous people, which in turn challenges the notion of 'purity' upheld by caste.

> Sociologists have often described caste as a 'closed system' of stratification where social groups, often divided on the basis of their occupation, strictly follow the code of behaviour

prescribed by tradition regarding marriage and kinship alliances. Caste groups are unequal, ranked on a scale of hierarchy based in their ritual status, from pure to impure. Their 'status' or position in the system determines with whom they can interact and with whom they cannot. The idea and practice of untouchability is an integral part of the caste system (Jodhka 2013, p xi).

The novel continues to critique the socio-hierarchical setting (of caste) by referring to the spatial privileges of the upper caste brahmins who were able to migrate to better places like Delhi, Calcutta and London (54). The spatial segregation of the Dalits based on untouchability is explicitly stated in the novel,

> That explained the separate wells and the separate graveyards and the separate streets. That explained why we had to stay out of the schools. That explained why we had to stay outside their homes. That explained why our homes were in the *cheri*, outside their villages. That explained why our people had been killed. That explained everything that required explanation (219).

This segregation, resulting in Ambedkar's notion of spatial hierarchy, is also imposed while the Dalits attempt to conduct a funeral procession after the massacre. They are not allowed to go beyond the Pallaththeru and the Paraththeru which are the street of the Pallar and Parayar caste respectively (244).

When it comes to the feminist facet of the novel, Kandasamy gives representation to female voices and the novel is written from multiple perspectives. Maayi/old woman/the gypsy woman is the protagonist, and this is the only textual narrative in English with a female lead. The narrative keeps shifting from the viewpoint of the

author to that of the different female characters in the novel. This fictional narrative stands out as the primary source detailing the greatest number of female survivors. The historical representations of the women include both the victims and the feminist activists who were actively engaged in rehabilitated the Kilvenmani survivors. The intertextual reference to other resources on the massacre and the presence of the real women associated with the massacre (like Krishnammal Jagannathan in p. 21) are evidence that the work is a result of immense research. From figure 5(b) it can be deduced that the text does not give details of any upper caste women nor their spatial locations which makes it difficult to understand their role especially in the decision-making processes of the massacre.

The novel stands out as an essential resource for this study by presenting a detailed comprehensive feminist account of Dalit women's experiences of the massacre in contrast to the other accounts of the massacre considered for this study that are presented from a male viewpoint. The novel also includes a list of the female victims of the massacre (151-56) and is the only narrative that discusses the sexual violence – rape and molestation (34, 142) that occurred during the massacre. Kandasamy also highlights the crucial but frequently neglected participation of women in the Thanjavur agrarian revolution, which is rarely addressed in other discussions of Dalit movements and activism focusing on a demand for increase in wages. They fought against the gender discrimination in wages and was whipped and stripped naked for this (75-76)

> And then these women said that if the men wanted their mothers and wives and sisters and daughters to live with some honour and dignity, they should stand by the Communists and continue to fight these rowdy landlords (117).

The text employs recurring gendered spatial metaphors, linking the land, especially Nagapattinam and Kilvenmani, to the female body throughout the narrative. Nagapattinam is depicted as an old woman who imbibes the culture, religion and stories of the 'vellaikkaaran' (the white man) or her conquerors consisting of the Portugese, the Danish and the British (16). "Everyone stole her rice, and left religion as a souvenir. She lived with their gods, like old women often do" (16). Kilvenmani itself is portrayed as a woman serving as a means to uncover the traumatic events which remain buried in the caste-ridden rural areas of Tamil Nadu (199). Both female Dalit body and land are commodified as objects to be rightfully exploited by upper caste men (Sabharwal 2015). The portrayal of female body as a battleground also reflects this sustained critique of the intersection between land and women's experiences. Like Letchumi who,

> could feel a hundred fights inside her body… she thought her dead mother, Kaveri, was inside her, that her dead friends, Virammal and Sethu, were inside her and that their hearts were beating inside her breast. She was sure that their bodies had been burnt, but their souls had escaped to safety and now they were alive within her and soon they would begin to speak (199).

This provides a stark counterpoint to the traditional romanticized images of villages and rural women, as Kandasamy's analogies between land and women emphasise their shared experiences of colonization, conquest, and subjugation.

The figure 7 shows the feminine space of Kilvenmani (Dalit feminine space to be more precise, given the concentration of the lower caste women in Kilvenmani) and Nagapattinam, which further encompasses the female Dalit survivors – both living and dead. The living female body is depicted as embodying the dead through

Letchumi. Here, both the land and the female body becomes the feminist geocritical sites bearing the trauma of physical and sexual violence against Dalits. Kandasamy effectively makes use of Kilvenmani as a geographical code to create a female literary language of the massacre. The work therefore gives importance to gender, space and caste in a manner that reveals the intersectional postcolonial feminist identity of Dalit women bearing the remnants of a colonial past (figure 6). This past is further intertwined with the caste-reality of the independent India. Also, the author, Kandasamy, hails from Nagapattinam and has an omnipresent role in the narrative thereby making it easier to locate the author and the characters within the same space. The author's presence in the same space also increases the reliability of the researched facts that are presented throughout the novel.
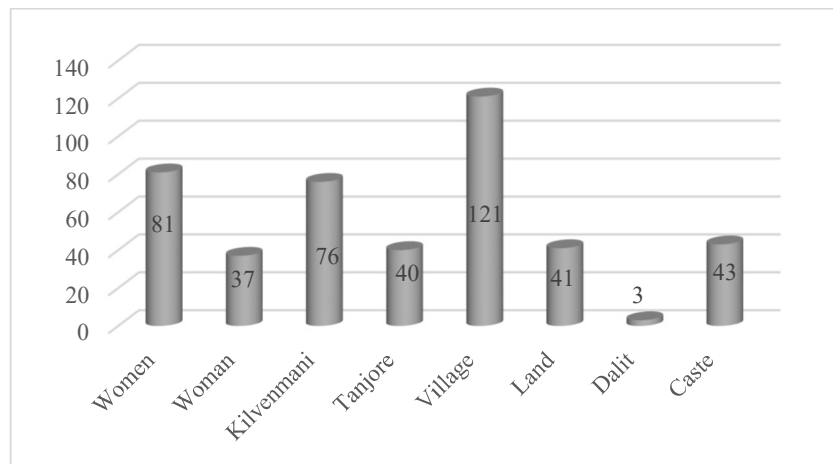
Figure 6: Graph of the Frequency of Selected Words Related to Gender, Caste and Place in *The Gypsy Goddess* (Word count obtained using Voyant)

The graph mapping the frequency and co-occurrence of place, caste, and gender-related terms within the text, reveals important patterns that inform the socio-political dimensions of Dalit massacres. The prominence of spatial markers—such as "village" and "land"—

alongside caste and gendered terms, underscores the deeply embedded nature of spatial segregation and social hierarchies in caste-based violence. Through the graph, the author's choice to emphasize the actual location of the massacre – Kilvenmani and Tanjore and a female-centric viewpoint—features absent from other narratives—becomes evident. These terms not only reflect narrative choices but point to the lived realities in which Dalit communities are often spatially marginalized and systematically excluded from access to land and resources. Furthermore, the frequent appearance of gendered terms—especially in conjunction with caste—highlights how violence against Dalits is frequently gendered, with Dalit women targeted as a means of asserting caste dominance especially during the massacres. This textual pattern echoes historical accounts of massacres, where space is not merely a backdrop but an active agent in the orchestration of violence, and where gendered bodies are sites through which caste power is both exercised and resisted. While digital tools like Voyant offer a surface-level visualization of these patterns, such data gains interpretive depth when situated within the structural realities of caste and gender oppression in India.

3. *Heat* (Vekkai) (2019) by Poomani and translated by N. Kalyan Raman

The novel, originally titled *Vekkai* (1982) in Tamil (translates 'Heat'), is often helmed as a modern Tamil classic novel, that explores the caste and landownership patterns that are still practiced in Tamil Nadu. There are no direct references to the massacre in the main plot, except for the use of arson to escape caste enmity (48). The novel is relevant to this study as it revolves around the central theme of caste and landownership patterns in Tamil Nadu, which are the major reasons that led to the massacre. This is also explicitly stated in the novel, "[t]he rich guys couldn't stomach the fact that we were farming

our own piece of land" (47). The limitations imposed on Dalits in accessing natural resources, due to untouchability practices, are exemplified by the issues surrounding the communal water tank (149) and the scarcity of water in Dalit villages (206). The novel is also important as the main plot revolving around the shooting by the Dalit boy, is inspired from real life incidents (238). The film *Asuran* (2019) expands on the novel's main storyline by introducing the massacre as the father's backstory, making it a relevant addition to this study.

The novel is noteworthy for its numerous references to caste-based spatial segregation in Tamil Nadu some of which are outlined here. First, the narrative omits the name of the protagonist's village, occupied by Dalits, whereas it specifically mentions the village across, Vadakkur ('the northern village', p. 5), which is inhabited by landlords. In the movie *Asuran*, the space of the lower caste is referred to as Thekkur (the southern village), as a counterpart to Vadakkur. Therefore, for plotting the location of the Dalit survivors in this study (figure 5b) the geographical coordinates of Thekkur are utilized. This binarization of opposite spaces based on caste further makes it easier for the perpetrators to locate and commit violence against the minority communities. Second, the narrative is deeply intertwined with the landscape, as is reflected in the title *Vekkai*, which loosely translates to "heat rising from the ground". The use of agricultural metaphors to describe the struggle for land between the upper and the lower caste also reveals this intersection. "Yes, to remove weeds. If you don't get rid of them, they won't let the crop grow" (41). Third, the caste-based spatial segregation in Tamil Nadu is illustrated by depicting Dalit settlements on the peripheries of villages, described as being situated in areas surrounded by "forested tank beds, rocky outcrops, graveyards, temples, and cane fields." (241). The caste and the space relation are also evident in the name of the landlord – Vadakkuran – who hails from the upper caste village of Vadakkur – indicating that

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the place becomes the caste identity and vice-versa. This is also true for spaces like Kilvenmani that became popular as Dalit spaces after Dalit massacres. The landscape is also often described in detail, especially during the scenes in which the father and the son hides from the landlord's henchmen taking refuge in the open rocks and forest patches. The use of arson to oppress the Dalits by destroying their lives and land is also portrayed in the novel. "We were scared that the villagers might come anytime and set fire to the house. The women and children slept inside; my father and I had to stand outside all night and guard the house" (46).
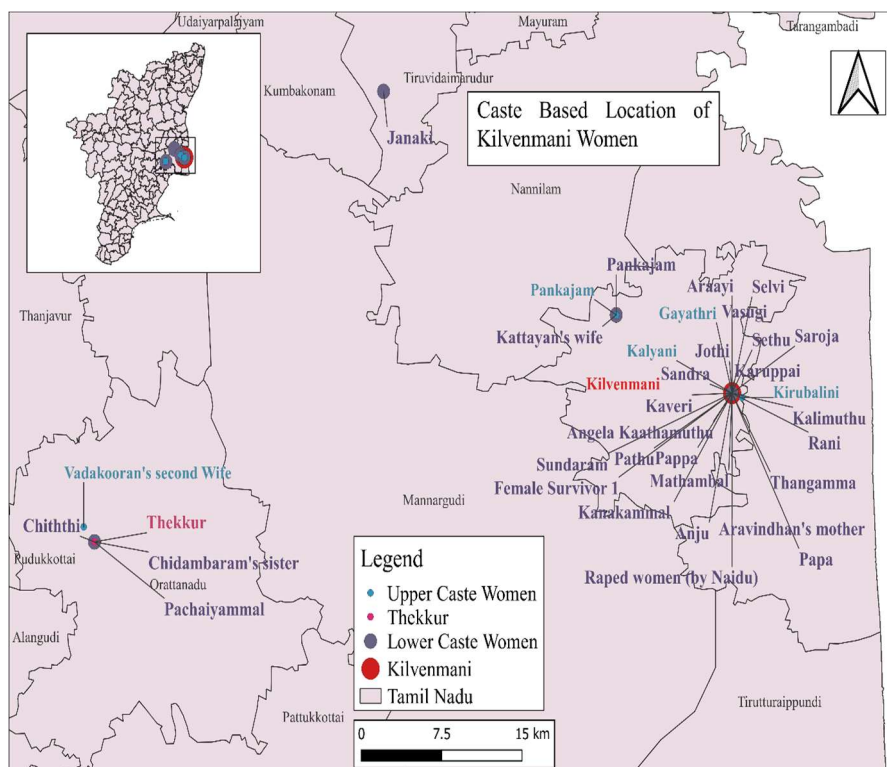
Figure 7: Caste-based Mapping of Women of the Kilvenmani Massacre

Female characters are few in number as the primary focus is on caste struggle between men, narrated from the perspective of Chidambaram, a teenage Dalit boy. The prominence of the male characters is reflected by their distinct names and identities (the father

Paramasivam and Chidambaram), whereas the female characters are primarily named by their relationship to Chidambaram (as Aaththa – mother, Atththai – paternal aunt, Chiththi – mother's sister). Nevertheless, the narrative effectively incorporates a broad spectrum of female characters, seamlessly integrating them into the plot despite their limited number. Aaththa ('mother'), for instance, is bold and longs for revenge against the atrocities committed by the upper caste landlords ("she was rearing to go and drink his blood", pp 39) whereas Aththai ('father's sister') is depicted as fragile and fearful. This novel, like the other ones considered for the study, mentions a mythical character but only in passing, Female deity (unnamed), that is closely associated with the lives of the Dalits (pp 168). The second main cluster of women related to the massacre from *Heat* (2019) is seen in Thekkur (figures 5 and 7). Thekkur, like Kilvenmani, also becomes a Dalit female space due to its concentration of Dalit women (figure 7).

Films:

1. *Kann Sivanthal Mann Sivakum* (1983) directed by Sreedhar Rajan

The film (roughly translates to English as *When Eyes Turn Red, the Soil Will Too*) is an adaptation of *Kuruthipunal* (1978). The film's setting remains ambiguous until a newspaper report later discloses Satyapuri, a fictional village, as the site of death of a prominent character, Kaalai (1:31:51). Satyapuri forms a distinct cluster that symbolizes a space integrating women from both upper-caste and lower-caste backgrounds. Satyapuri can hence be seen as the site that exists at the intersection of a Dalit space like Kilvenmani or Thekkur and an upper caste space like Vadakkur or Meletheru. Satyapuri also intersects with Kilvenmani, the real site of the massacre, as the massacre is positioned here (1:43:00) and also based on the landscape descriptions given in the novel *Kuruthipunal*. The landlord,

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Pannaiyar's henchmen are shown to be setting fire to the Dalit settlement when they protested for a rise in wages under the leadership of the characters Vairamuthu and Kaalai (1:43:00).

The female characters in the film have more depth and evolves in a better way. Arundati, a dancer and researcher, is the central character who replaces the role of the protagonist Shiva of *Kuruthipunal*. The film, like the novel presents distinct female experiences. Arundhati represents the educated upper caste urban woman, an outsider. Arundhati is constantly contrasted with the Dalit women of the caste-based villages of Tamil Nadu. The 'differences' in lived female experiences of the massacre are highlighted through Arundhati and the other Dalit women – while there is an attempted rape on Arundhati during the massacre, the Dalit women are both raped and massacred. Pappathi (upper-caste) is a combination of *Kuruthipunal*'s Pappathi (lower-caste) and Pankajam (upper-caste). Pappathi, therefore, symbolically represents the abuse endured by both the upper caste and lower caste women at the hands of the upper caste males.

This film employs the trope of the 'angry young hero' through the character of Goutham, mirroring the archetype employed in the other films about Kilvenmani. In the film, Pannaiyar (Rajarathnam), the landlord, is not impotent, diverging from the novel's depiction and removing any link between his impotence and his aggressive behaviour (physical and mental). Feminist justice is served in the film when he is later killed by Pappathi, the victim of his sexual violence. The film also makes use of traditional folk songs and background music to narrate the exploitation of Dalit community. The history of a Dalit saint Nandanar, is brought to the centre of the narrative in the form of theru kooth/street play as Arundhati researches on this theme. She, together with Goutham, reworks *Nandanarcharitham* (The Legend of

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Nandanar) based on her experiences in the village including the caste atrocities by the landlord. By presenting the harsh realities of caste discrimination in Tamil Nadu's rural areas, the film skillfully captures the experiences of women in these settings from the perspective of outsiders such as Gautam and Arundhati.

2. *Aravindhan* (1997) written and directed by T. Nagarajan

The film does not directly use the Kilvenmani massacre plot rather the massacre becomes a sub-plot of the narration. The narrative of *Aravindhan* is predominantly from a male perspective, featuring Aravindhan as the eponymous hero and highlighting his endeavours to reform the society in the aftermath of the massacre. The film features a larger-than-life hero committed to saving the laborers, aligning with the commercial success formula that recurs in most commercial textual and visual portrayals of the massacre. This is in contrast with art films such as *Kann Sivanthal Mann Sivakum* (1983) where the massacre is unraveled through the character of Arundhati and *The Gypsy Goddess* (2014) that has strong female protagonists. Real life references are absent in the film but there are direct references to the massacre like the mention of the death of 44 people using arson (Nagarajan 1997, 21:55:00). The settings of the film keep changing but the place names are never mentioned, though the events mentioned in the narratives indirectly indicate that the setting is Kilvenmani. For the purpose of mapping, the survivors are placed in Kilvenmani in figures 5 and 7. The film touches on the topic of a labour strike driven by demands for better wages (Nagarajan 1997, 12:52:00) and their protest against the attempts by the landlord to import laborers from neighboring villages. The act of resistance and assertion of basic rights by the Dalit labourers instigates Gopalakrishna Naidu to set fire to the huts in the village (Nagarajan 1997, 16:25:00). The naming and depiction of the direct involvement of the upper caste landlord in the massacre, sets the film

apart from the other films that avoid such graphic casteist detailing of the massacre. However, there are no prominent female characters, only two stereotypical upper caste oblivious heroines (Anu and Gayathri) who play the love interests of Aravindhan. Aravindhan's mother (unnamed) however, evolves as a strong character over the course of the film. The film thus addresses the caste-based struggles in rural Tamil Nadu (focusing more on the heroic deeds of the protagonist and other male characters like Thamizhvannan who kills Naidu in the film) but overlooks the female experiences on these issues.

3. *Virumaandi* (2004) written and directed by Kamal Haasan

In *Virumaandi* written and directed by Haasan (2004) the massacre is deftly integrated into the narrative through the female protagonist, Angela Kaathamuthu who hails from Thanjavur, Kilvenmani. When the sub-jailer pesters her to know her exact native place ("Is it proper Thanjavur?") in order to get an idea about her caste she bluntly replies "Kilvenmani" upon which he is shaken, doesn't reply and walks away (Haasan 2004, 58:47). This conversation brings to light the lingering wounds of trauma and violence that both women and land continue to endure (as Letchumi in *The Gypsy Goddess*) when Kaathamuthu is used as a metaphor to denote the caste-based massacre that took place in Kilvenmani. The placing of the protagonist against the village has strong political implications as the place name Kilvenmani had become synonymous to the massacre by the time of the film release. There is no further reference or explanation regarding the massacre in the film. The film is therefore an example of a mainstream narrative that indirectly refers to the massacre without going into the intricate details of the (caste) politics behind it. Nevertheless, this is the first visual narrative that actually make use of the exact name of the site of the massacre.

A feminist reading of the film is also possible in the change in name of Angela Kaathamuthu to Angela James after marriage and back. This shows the transference of female ownership, like land, from one man to another.

> My father, Kaathamuthu, was hanged to death in this very jail. He worked hard to educate me. He borrowed heavily to get me married. I was Angela James after marriage. In order to protect me, he killed James, confessed to the murder and was hanged to death here. I am now Angela Kaathamuthu, Dr. Angela Kaathamuthu with a doctorate in civil law (01:03:17).

Female body is also directly compared to land in the film, when Virumaandi states that he will not sell his land as it holds his grandmother's body. He says, "I won't sell this land – it is not a land but my grandmother's body" in the scene of his grandmother's burial. This is a highly political movie that discusses death penalty, caste violence and police brutality all of which are themes related to the massacre. The film is significant to this feminist geocritical analysis as it uses a female lead to indirectly evoke the memory of the massacre and also because of the land and female body comparisons.

4. *Asuran* (2019) written and directed by Vetrimaaran

The film, which is an adaptation of *Heat* (2019), follows the lives of the Dalit couple Sivasami, referred to as Paramasivam in the novel, and Pachaiyammal, who is unnamed in the novel. The settings are fictionalized but the village mentioned is similar to Kilvenmani as there are mentions of real places like Thekkur (the southern village) inhabited by the Dalits, Vadakkur (the northern village) inhabited by the upper castes and Thirunelvelli, which are all places closer to Kilvenmani. In divergence from the novel, Sivasami's past is expanded to include the massacre. The family's rift with the upper caste landlord

Vadakooran and their consequent exile forms the main plot of the visual narrative. At the macrolevel, the film explores a dispute between two families over land ownership, whereas a microlevel analysis reveals the casteist ego of the upper caste landlords who were unable to stand the land acquisition by Dalits. This theme is important as the casteist ego of the landlord is the main reason behind Dalit massacres.

Unlike the novel, the film engages in a feminist exploration by naming and further developing the female characters. Both Pachaiyammal (the wife) and Mariyamma of lower caste are presented as solid female characters who fights for their rights. Marginalization of upper caste women are also presented in the film through Vadakooran's wife, who is both unnamed and silenced. The spatial distribution of the women from the movie is evident in the cluster of figures 5(b) and 7, which shows the caste-based segregation of the women. The Dalit women are located in the village of Thekkur whereas the upper caste woman is located in a safer space of Vadakkur. The film thus portrays the gendered experiences of space. The confrontation where Pachaiyammal defends her well from the upper-caste landlord underscores the persistent barriers Dalits encounter in accessing essential natural resources. The interplay between the real and fictional places in the narrative and the references to caste-based segregations, also helps to identify the Dalit gendered identities in the rural casteist areas of Tamil Nadu.

Echoing the novel, the younger son of the couple bears the name Chidambaram. The protagonist in the film is the father, in contrast to the novel where the son Chidambaram is the protagonist. The character of the father, Sivasami, is altered to depict him as a hero who protects his family, contrary to the novel, where he is an ordinary Dalit man who is both scared and vulnerable. This tendency to valorize the hero is also visible in the other textual and visual narratives on the

massacre (*Kann Sivanthal Mann Sivakum* and *Aravindhan*). The film also suggests education as the only way to escape caste-based violence and discrimination (in the conversation between Sivasami and Chidambaram where the former advices his son along similar lines).

ii. Non-Fictional Survivors or Historical Representations

The historical representations of the massacre are obtained from the sources that are discussed in detail below and from English online newspapers. As all the female victims who died in the massacre were taking refuge in Ramayya's hut, they are located in the same space, Kilvenmani, thereby resulting in one strong cluster, as evident in the figure 8 given below.

1. Essays: *Haunted by Fire: Essays on Caste, Class, Exploitation and Emanicipation* (2016) by Mythily Sivaraman

Section 3 of the essays by Sivaraman (2016) entitled *Land and Labour*, contains two significant works that are relevant to this study. The essays discuss the massacre and the reasons behind it. The first essay entitled *Venmani and the Free Press*, starts with the image of "pieces of bright glass bangles" broken during the massacre (159). This image is repeated throughout the essay. The essay documents Sivaraman's experiences during her interview with the female survivors after the massacre. Though this essay by Sivaraman is important because of her first-hand experience with the survivors, she does not identify or document the names of the survivors, but homogenizes their experiences by referring to the survivors as 'they' and 'them'. She highlights the importance of the caste in the massacre by quoting the survivors who "shrugged it [the class angle] off, as something not so relevant to the incident" (p160). This essay is significant as Sivaraman analyses some of the Tamil newspapers (dailies) of the time to understand and highlight the omission of the

caste angle in the massacre. In dailies, "it had seemed a simple dispute between communists and non-communist kisans over wages with the former cast in the role of aggressors" (pp 160).

The fourth essay in the same section entitled *Gentlemen Killers of Kilvenmani* does an extensive study of the different verdicts on the massacre, from the lower session's courts to the upper Supreme court. The essay serves as a source for obtaining the gaps in female representation in the legal proceedings related to the massacre. There are no mention or identification of the female survivors as victims in any legal case in the essay. Sivaraman goes beyond merely quoting and citing the verdicts by also offering a critical analysis through the lens of caste. She compares the court verdicts on the murder of Pakkirisamy, an upper-caste with the Kilvenmani verdict to show that while the Dalit culprit of the former case was convicted, the landlords were acquitted in the latter. This work is hence significant in terms of the information it provides regarding the caste-biased judgements on the massacre. The judicial system believed, "it is beneath the dignity of a landlord to pollute his hands with the blood of a paraiya". The essay covers almost all the verdicts related to the massacre and it is important to note that there are no discussions about cases filed or verdicts on any gender-specific violence, sexual or otherwise. This implies that such instances mentioned in the fictional narratives like *The Gypsy Goddess*, *Chorapuzha*, and the non-fictional documentary, *Ramayyahvin Kudisai*, were overlooked by the police and the judicial system.

Figure 8: Intersection of Historical, Fictional and Mythical
Representations of the Women of the Kilvenmani Massacre

2. Documentary: *Ramayyahvin Kudisai* (2005) by Bharathi Krishnakumar

The only documentary on Kilvenmani massacre, *Ramayyahvin Kudisai*, that documents the series of events that led to the massacre. While it serves as a crucial repository of survivor accounts, it includes a relatively low representation of female voices in its oral histories. However, the male interviewees mention some names of the female survivors of the massacre. The song on Pakkiri's death by an old woman (20:15:00) shows, the use of songs by the Dalits to transfer their historical caste struggles to the future generations. The villages related to the massacre like Kilvenmani and Irinjiur are mentioned by the interviewees and one survivor mentions the presence of bangles as the evidence of female deaths (Krishnakumar 2005, 48:20). The land laws that were used for the exploitation of the Dalits are mentioned by some of the survivors, especially, "The Tanjore Pannaiyal Protection

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Act" (1952). The interviewees clearly mention the involvement of Naidu and the rape involved during the massacre, the latter which is neglected and unrecorded in most narratives on the massacre. The documentary is hence significant as the only surviving oral history of the massacre that throws light on the gender violence along with the spatial and casteist motives behind the brutality. Figure 5(b) shows the survivors mentioned in the documentary forming a major cluster in the village of Kilvenmani.

3. Online Newspaper Articles

Examining online newspaper articles about the Kilvenmani massacre sheds light on the inclusion and exclusion of female narratives surrounding the event. The articles analysed for this study are obtained (in 2021) using the following keywords in google search: "kilvenmani massacre", "kilvenmani massacre newspaper reports", "Kilvenmani", "female survivors of kilvenmani massacre", and "online articles on kilvenmani massacre". The news section in google browser is also consulted for the study. The major findings are outlined here:

a.) *Coverage of the massacre includes publications from both mainstream media outlets and independent organizations*

The massacre is referred to as "India's first well-chronicled massacre of Dalits" by *The Hindu* (Desk, 2018), and "first reported incident of caste violence in Independent India' by *The Print* (Tamalapakula, 2020) which are also echoed in most other newspapers.

b.) *There is a recurring pattern in how the massacre is reported across these articles*

The articles share a consistent structure, beginning with accounts of the events leading up to the massacre, followed by detailed descriptions of the night itself—such as the burning of Ramayya's hut—and

concluding with a look at the aftermath, including the memorial established and maintained by the CPI(M).

c.) *Female survivor narratives are either minimal or non-existent*

The descriptions about the massacre are followed by some accounts of the male survivors but most articles neither names nor describe the female experiences. However, the women activists and writers related to the massacre like Mythili Sivaraman, Krishnamma Jaganathan, and Meena Kandasamy are mentioned by several articles. The newspaper articles also focus on the feminist activists and organisations, especially the *Land for Tillers Freedom* by Krishnammal Jaganathan that played an important role in improving the lives of the Dalits especially Dalit women, in terms of land redistribution post the massacre (Kanagasabai, 2014).

9(a)

9(b)

113
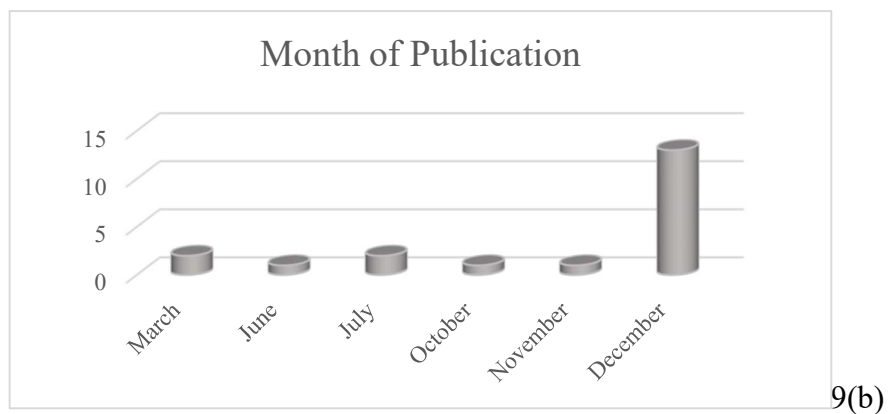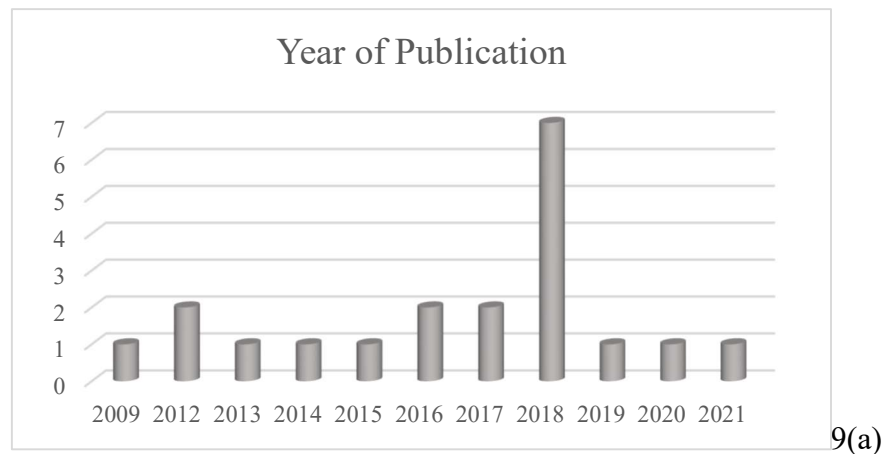
Figure 9: Graphs on the (a) Year and (b) Month of Publication of the
Newspaper Articles on the Kilvenmani Massacre

d) *Coverage of the massacre intensifies around its anniversary*

The database created on the newspaper articles showed that there is an increase in the number of articles on the massacre in 2018, which marked the 50th anniversary of the massacre, figure 9(a). New articles on the massacre are consistently published in December, reflecting a clear pattern tied to the anniversary of the event as shown in the figure 9(b). The newspaper reports also refer to the anniversary as the 'Venmani Martyr's Day' (Gokul 2012). The recent Dalit killings (Hathras) and the passing away of Mythily Sivaraman have also rekindled the mention of the massacre by the newspapers as shown in the graph above (figure 9).

e) *By focusing on class, the caste dimension tends to be neglected*

The articles are dismissive of the caste angle of the massacre, with most referring to the incident as an 'agrarian struggle' for an increase in wage (Ambika, 2019) or 'labour dispute' (Ambika, 2019). This resistance to use the term "Dalit" in the stories is evident with the mainstream newspaper articles as opposed to independent reports by *The Mint* and *PARI* that focus mainly on the caste aspect that led to the massacre.

f) *Commom Threads*

Most newspapers mention the death count to be 44 with the majority of the deceased being women and children. Nevertheless, very little information about, on, or from female survivors are available. The acquittal of the upper caste perpetrators by the courts is not mentioned by most newspapers nor are the judges named or judgements quoted. *Milli Gazette* (Kandasamy, 2015) on reporting Kandasamy's speech courageously quotes her, "we need to say their names to shame these

casteist fanatics, these retrogrades who occupy powerful positions". There is also a general reluctance to name the perpetrators of the massacre except for the main accused Gopalakrishna Naidu. 'Even before the massacre, *Theekadhir* the political organ of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) Tamil Nadu was the only newspaper to document the brewing tensions in the region' (Krishnakumar 2005, in Kanagasabai 2014).

g) *Post Massacre Scenario*

Accounts of the post-massacre situation in Kilvenmani vary, with some reports indicating little change in the conditions of the Dalits, who continue to marry within their caste, while others note that inter-caste marriages are beginning to occur (Fernando 2018). In contrast to this another report states, "in the past years since the gruesome massacre occurred, the mindset of the people in the village has changed" (Gokul 2012). A similar account is found in Manikandan's (2017) newspaper article:

> Many years have passed since the massacre but the socio-economic conditions of the people of Keezhvenmani have not changed. While one may derive satisfaction from the fact that hatred between caste Hindu landlords and Dalit farm labourers has come down, the ground reality is Keezhvenmani has not witnessed any significant developments in all these years apart from a large arch built to mark the 25th anniversary of the massacre on the Keezhvelur-Thiruthuraippoondi State Highway. The 105 huts and 15 tiled-roof houses tell tales of how development skipped past the hamlet.

> The reports also acknowledge that the incident led to land redistribution in the Tanjore district (Gunjan 2018) and that very few survivors were rehabilitated by the government into new houses (Manikandan 2017). The memorial erected by the CPI(M) to

commemorate the massacre is another recurring mention in the post-massacre sections of the newspaper reports. ". . . a memorial to those 'martyrs', erected by the CPI(M). It figures 44 names, engraved on black granite. Of these, 14 belonged to the same family. And the first name is that of Papa (25), Ramaiah's wife, who had offered her home as refuge" (Sundharabuddhan 2012).

2.4.2 Convergence and Divergence: Comparison of Survivors and Spaces

i. Real and Fictional survivors

The following themes are identified from the close reading of the selected texts using feminist geocriticism and digital cartography.

Intersectionality

The fictional characters that are identified in this study, are more in number (47) as compared to the data available on the historical representations (36 of 44). The names of certain historical survivors, like Pappathi and Janaki, are frequently echoed in fictional narratives as well. This accounts for the intersections between the experiences of the real and fictional female survivors. The fictional narratives are of significance to understanding the experiences of the upper caste women who were also silent perpetrators to the massacre (like Naidu's wife). Their caste privilege was overshadowed by their gender identity, which effectively stripped them of agency. Their caste identity, however, shielded them against caste-based violence. Dalit feminist arguments rejecting homogenisation of lived experience of women into a monolithic category (Mohanty 2003) and adopting an intersectional approach that takes into account the gender, class, and caste differences is evident here.

Caste also determined the spatial location of upper caste women, usually situating them away from the Dalit *Cheris*, thereby

resulting in the creation of casteist gendered spaces of security for the upper caste women. Women experienced spaces based on their caste and gender as seen here in the creation of upper caste female spaces and Dalit female spaces (figure 7). Extending on Ambedkar's (1935) concept of spatial hierarchy, here we can see the creation of gendered spaces of caste hierarchies. Even when Dalit women and upper caste women share the same space the latter is protected against caste-based violence (but both groups endure gender-based violence). Corroborating the feminist geocritical proposition that space is multiple, shifting and characterised by differences in experiences especially based on the intersectional identity of the individual occupying the space. Space should be considered as an intersectional category while analysing the female experiences of Dalit massacres in India.

Protagonists

The focus of the narratives is shifted to the male protagonists in the films, and his heroic actions as seen in *Aravindhan* (Aravindhan), *Kann Sivanthal Mann Sivakum* (Goutham) and *Asuran* (Sivasami). Arundhati of *Kann Sivanthal Mann Sivakum* (upper-caste) and Angela (lower-caste) of *Virumaandi* are the two characters that are used to bring in the massacre details indirectly. Their role is minimal and there are no attempts to valourise their actions. The act of placing a male protagonist, acting as a saviour is in stark contrast to reality as most of the 'saviours' associated with the massacre were feminist activists and organisations. Some prominent figures being Manalur Maniyamma, Krishnammal Jagannathan, Mythily Sivaraman, Meena Kandasamy and Kathleen Gough (figure 13). Most fictional narratives, particularly films, overlook the contributions of these real-life activists, who also had personal ties to the massacre site (Kandasamy belonged to Thanjavur). The absence of female voices in the narratives on caste is

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also visible in the textual narrative *Heat* (2019), in which the women are named only based on their cultural identity.

The distortion of women's heroic actions and redefining it as masculine actions is a result of 'gendered heroism' (Fried 1997) that refuses to acknowledge the leadership qualities of women. Patriarchal system with its traditional gender roles (of masculinity and femininity) expects only men and not women, to display valour and perform heroic deeds – as saviours or protectors of the marginalised. A re-gendering of the heroification discourse (Danilova and Ekaterina 2020) is required in the context of the Kilvenmani narratives as seen in Kandasamy's work. Meena Kandasamy places a well-written female protagonist, Maayi, at the centre of her textual narrative while also recognising and foregrounding the role of feminist activists in her work. The differences in the portrayal of characters and the spatial location are evident in the narratives. In *The Gypsy Goddess*, Maayi is from Kilvenmani, while in *Asuran*, Sivasamy, portrayed by Dhanush, is the main character from Kilvenmani.

Real and Mythical Survivors

Over the course of this study, it was difficult to acquire data on the actual female survivors as their names and narratives were significantly omitted even in the newspaper reports and other documents. Yet, female mythical characters (Figure 8) closely associated with the lives of the Dalits are represented in all the novels that are considered for this study. Myths in India, have a built-in caste system (Kashyap 2023, p. 194) and have been traditionally used by the upper caste to propagate caste hierarchies. The narratives studied here, subverts this practice by using mythical characters to question the notions of spatial hierarchy and 'purity-pollution' concepts of the caste system. Kandasamy is known for offering "counter narratives of power and also to empower the female collective" by questioning the inherent

caste and gender bias of myths (Kashyap 2023, p. 197). Neelayadakshi of *The Gypsy Goddess*, serves as a reminder for the colonial past of Kilvenmani that resulted in the loss of caste purity due to the mixing between the colonisers and the colonised. The Centry Goddess of *Kuruthipunal*, on the other hand, is located in a casteless space to signify the juncture that demarcates the space occupied by the upper caste and the Dalits. She becomes the symbol for castelessness and spatial segregation. Both the instances underline the futility of trying to adhere to the caste system and its spatial segregation in the present times.

Gender-based Violence

Rape is often used as a political weapon (Chakravarti 2018, p. 173) to silence the individual and the community. Dalit female body "is often used as a means for the upper castes to assert their dominant position over the lowest castes in the [caste] hierarchy" (Sabharwal 2015) which leads to an increase in gender-based violence during massacres. The gender-based violence that took place during the massacre are completely ignored in most of narratives despite the mention of rape in *The Gypsy Goddess* (p. 142) as well as in *Ramayyahvin Kudisai*. The focus of research and newspaper articles are solely on the burning of the hut, thereby overlooking other atrocities such as rape and police brutality that were committed as part of the massacre. There is also limited information on upper-caste female survivors who were present in or near the massacre site, both in historical records and fictional portrayals. This makes it difficult to understand their role in the incident. Were they also silent perpetrators or victims or both?

ii. Space

Real and Fictional Settings

The settings used in both the textual and visual fictional narratives are either real spaces that are geolocatable (using location coordinates) or fictional spaces both of which are closer to Kilvenmani, Nagapattinam, and/or Thanjavur. Of the seven fictional texts considered for the study, three of the texts use fictional spaces *(Kann Sivanthal Mann Sivakum*, *Aravindhan*, *Asuran*), two use real places close to Kilvenmani (*Chorapuzha*, *Heat*) and two make use of Kilvenmani as the site of the massacre (*The Gypsy Goddess*, *Virumaandi*). We found that the use of fictional settings enabled the writers to freely expand on reasons that led to the massacre and the events during the massacre while avoiding the socio-political implications that might arise on using the real names of the settings, victims and perpetrators. Fictional spaces and characters enabled the authors to talk about "the unspeakable and give voice to the unheard and unseen realities" (Müller 2018, p. 25) of the massacre.

The fictional rural spaces used as the site of massacre in the narratives are unnamed, except for *Kann Sivanthal Mann Sivakum* in which the fictional village is named Satyapuri. Fictional spaces also have landscape similar to that of Kilvenmani (with caste-based segregation). Similarity in the landscape is especially evident in *Heat* (2019), "forested tank bed, rocky outcrops, graveyard, temple and cane field" (241). Consequently, there are clear intersections between the real (Kilvenmani) and the fictional spaces (Satyapuri) (figure 8) that point to a possible existing third space which represents the survivors at the site of the massacre. Despite the use of such fictional aspects, there are direct references to the Kilvenmani massacre in most narratives, which enables the readers to draw parallels. Some such recurring parallels are the strike for rise in wages, the act of torching the hut killing women and children and the reference to the death of 44 Dalits.

The spaces are directly attributed with a feminine nature – Kilvenmani and Nagapattinam are portrayed as females in *The Gypsy Goddess*. The intersections in the figures 8 and 10 indicate that Kilvenmani is a Dalit feminine space bearing the memories of the living and the dead Dalit women. Both the land and the female body bears the trauma of the past. The massacre is named after the place where it occurs, highlighting the connection between the two.
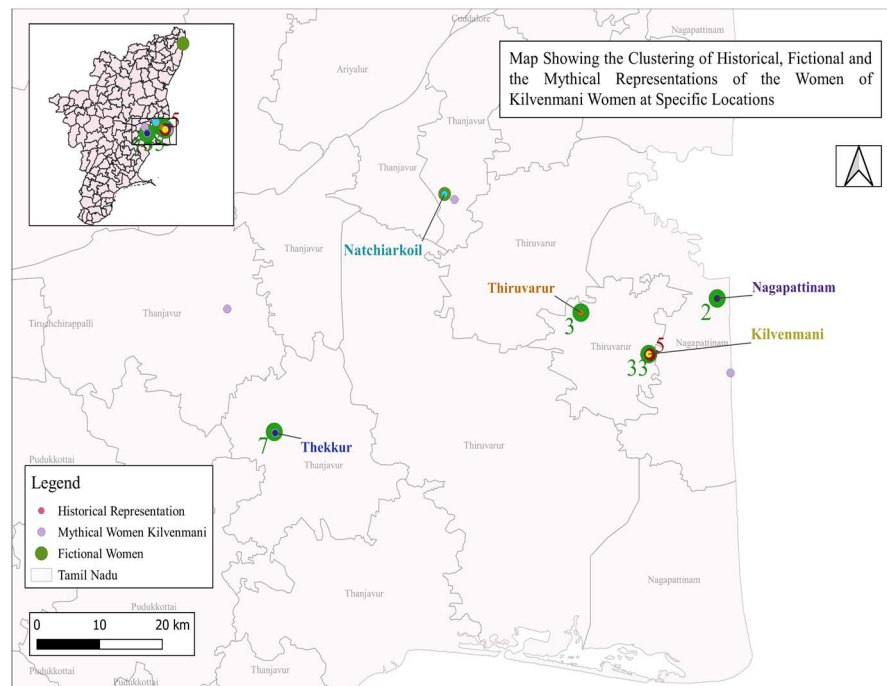
Figure 10: The Five Main Places Where the Female Survivors Cluster

Figure 10 is compiled based on the clustering of survivors in specific places. The minimum value chosen for the curation of clusters is 2 and the maximum value is 33. The figures 8 and 10 indicates that the clustering of the survivors occur in five main geolocatable spaces – Kilvenmani (33 fictional and 5 historical representations), Nagapattinam (2 fictional representations), Thiruvarur (3 fictional representations), Natchiarkoil (1 fictional and 1 mythical representation), Thekkur (7 fictional representations), along with the

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fictional space of Satyapuri (which for the purpose of mapping is taken as Kilvenmani). The intersection between the real and the fictional survivors occurs mainly in the spaces of Kilvenmani and Satyapuri as the other fictional and the mythical characters are scattered. This shows a possible 'third space' where the real and the fictional survivors co-exist thereby indicating that the fictional narratives are based on the Kilvenmani massacre (even if it is not directly mentioned).
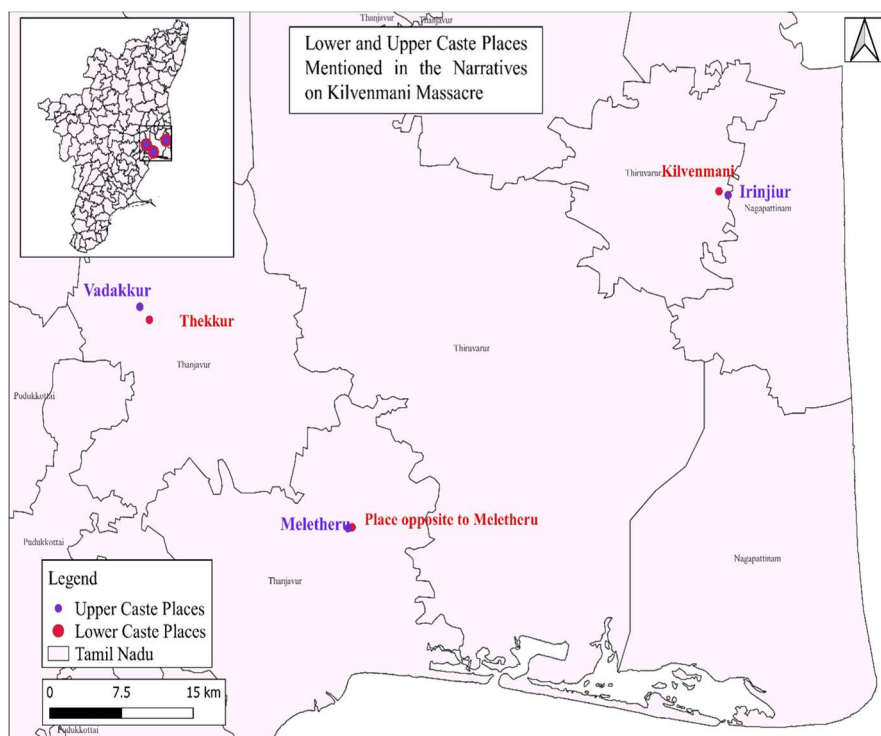
Figure 11: Lower and upper Caste Places Mentioned in the Narratives on the Kilvenmani Massacre

The caste-based spatial segregation of the female survivors (figure 10) resulting in the clustering mentioned above reveal spatial segregation in the rural areas of Tamil Nadu. An instance of caste-segregation can be observed in one of the texts studied, *Chorapuzha*, when Gopal introduces the location of the upper caste 'Meletheru' (upper land) to his friend and dismisses the place beyond as where the

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(Dalit) labourers reside (pp 43). He does not even mention the name of the Dalit space. When it comes to the female survivors the upper caste women are located either in Meletheru, Irinjiur or Vadakkur whereas the lower caste women are located in Kilvenmani or Thekkur (figure 11), which in turn made the latter more vulnerable to caste-based violence. This results in the creation of binarized gendered spaces of caste i.e., Dalit female space and upper caste female space or lower caste space and upper caste space (figure 11). Digital cartographical tools like QGIS makes it easier to viualise and analyse such binarisations that might otherwise go unnoticed.

2.4.3 Additional Literature

Following the geocritical practice of multifocality, this study does not restrict its analyses to the selected texts but conducts a feminist geocritical and digital cartographical analysis of additional literatures such as authors, land laws, feminist activists and organisations as well as court orders, letters and petitions.

i. Authors

An analysis of the authors' gender and spatial location helps reveal how these aspects influence the narratives within the primary fictional and non-fictional texts. Seven of nineteen authors who were considered for this study were women with the majority being males (figure 12). Female authors (Kandasamy, Kanagasabai) are keener in uncovering the gaps in understanding the nuances of the Dalit female experiences whereas male authors were mainly focused on creating a heroic male protagonist (gendered heroism) who eventually became a saviour to the villagers/labourers. Female authors were able to utilise geography (both real and fictional) as a code to create female literary narratives in accordance with the *geo-parler femme* principle of feminist geocriticism. The female authors are also a mix of upper

(Mythily Sivaraman) and lower caste (Meena Kandasamy) thereby highlighting the significance of allyship in Dalit feminist endeavours. Dalit female authors, leveraging their own lived experiences, were particularly adept at illustrating the intersection of gender and caste atrocities suffered by lower-caste women. Kandasamy, for instance, narrates her experiences with caste, untouchability and gender giving more credibility to her writings. She also remains as an omnipresent narrator providing authorial commentary that helps the readers to understand her takes on the events leading to and after the massacre. "The authorial commenting grows out of prefaces and gets into the literary work itself, and collaborate in synthetizing elements that organize its content and form" (Sazonova 2024).
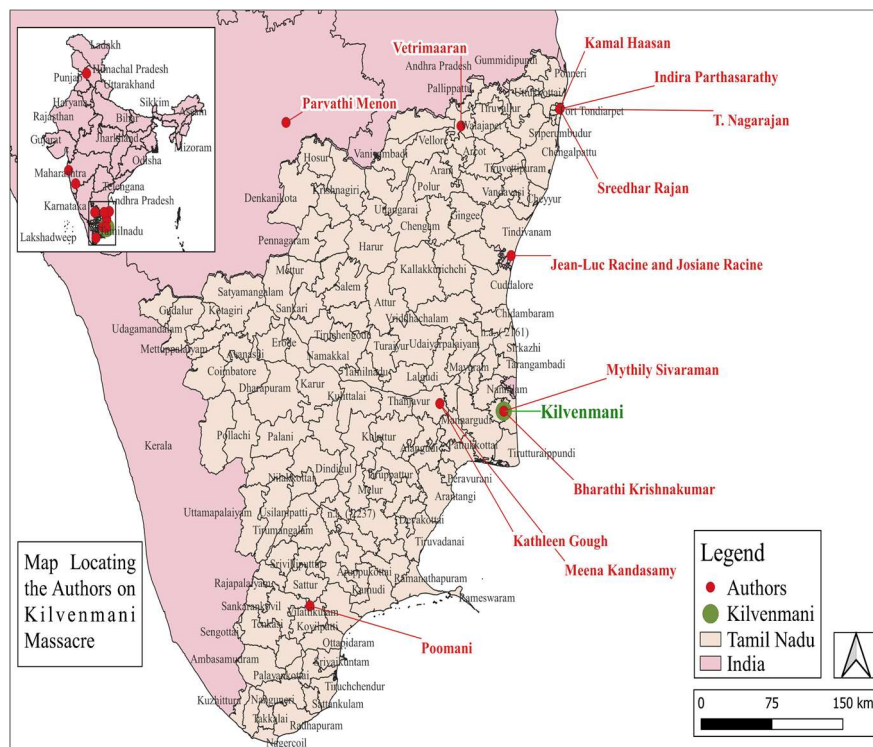
Figure 12: Locations of Prominent Authors of the Kilvenmani Massacre

Location of the authors play a significant role in developing the narrative of the massacre. Most of them were located near the site of the massacre or within Tamil Nadu (like Chennai) which allowed them

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to collect and incorporate more details into their narratives. The lived experiences of the authors enabled them to understand and authentically portray the caste-segregation in the villages. Meena Kandasamy, a Dalit woman with her roots in Thanjavur, was able to gather more information from female survivors, as they were more inclined to open up to someone, they felt was one of their own. Kandasamy's omnipresence in *The Gypsy Goddess* allows for a seamless connection between the author and the characters, thereby bolstering the reliability of the facts depicted in the novel. A similar geocritical feminist reading is also possible from the author Indira Parthasarathy. The author originally named R. Parthasarathy prefers to write in his wife's name. Also, his native place is Mannarkudi of Thanjavur which is close to the site of the massacre thereby showing his interest and knowledge about the massacre.

ii. Land Laws

The existing casteist laws only allowed the upper caste landlords to own large acres of land thereby leaving most of the Dalit labourers landless. The caste-based land ownership system in Thanjavur, which causes spatial segregation, is later challenged by land reforms that aim to redistribute land to the labourers. *The Tanjore Pannaiyal Protection Act*, 1952 (Kanagasabai 2014), *the Tamil Nadu Cultivating Tenants Protection Act*, 1955 (Kanagasabai 2014) and *the Land Ceiling Act*, 1961 (Govardan 2017), are some laws formulated to better the conditions of the Dalits in Tamil Nadu. *The Tanjore Pannaiyal Protection Act* (1952) aimed to "provide for the improvement of agrarian conditions in the district of Tanjore" whereas the Tamil Nadu Cultivating Tenants (Protection) Act (1955) provides "the cultivating tenants in the state, protection from eviction on the ground of arrears of rent. This act also lays down the rights of tenants in the state and provides legal definition of tenant and related

terminology". *The Land Ceiling Act* (1961) is "enacted with a view to reduce the disparity in the ownership of the agricultural land and concentration of such land with certain persons and to distribute such land among the landless poor". Despite the existence of such strong laws in favour of the Dalit labourers, the landlords of Tamil Nadu found ways to subjugate them (especially using arson and massacre) and to prevent them from becoming landowners. The disparity in landowning patterns is also stated in the texts that were studied. In *Heat* it is stated, "[i]f everyone had their own piece of land, why would they all go through this trouble? They would work quietly on their own land, wouldn't they?" (57-58). The feminist activists and organisations (described in the following section), had to intervene, to ensure the implementation of these laws and for the redistribution of land to the Dalit labourers after the massacre.

iii. Feminist Activists and Organisations

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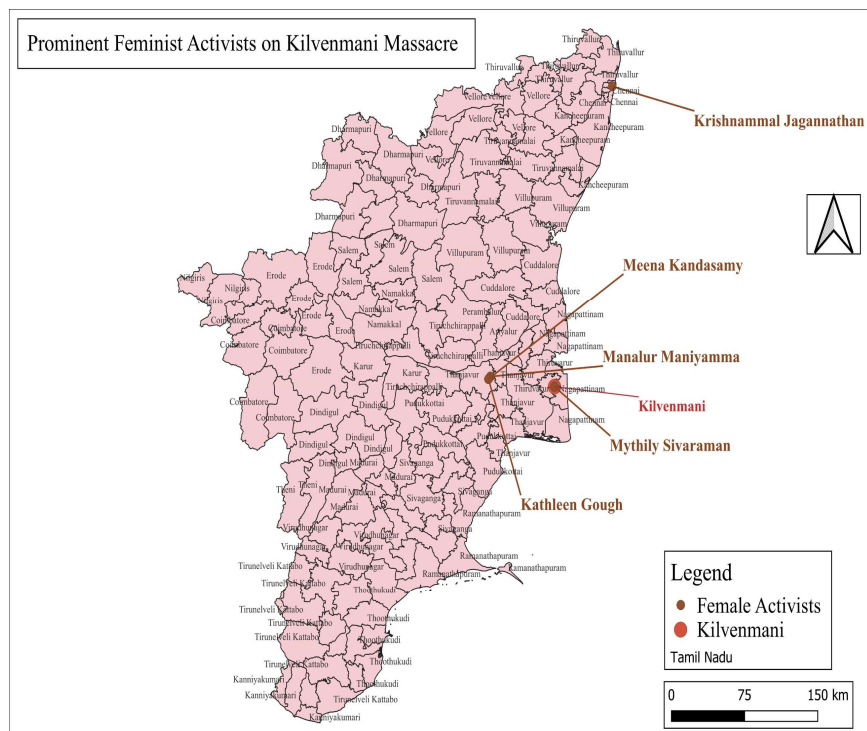
Figure 13: Locations of the Prominent Feminist Activists of the
Kilvenmani Massacre

The newspaper reports examined in this study (Ambica 2019; Pawar 2018) underscore the crucial role played by feminist activists and organizations in the redistribution of land to Dalits following the massacre. Figure 13, shows the names and locations of the activists. Some prominent figures include Krishnammal Jagannathan, Mythily Sivaraman, Meena Kandasamy and Kathleen Gough. Manalur Maniyamma was involved in the fight for Dalit land rights even before the massacre (Muralidharan 2018). Sivaraman was also part of the *All India Democratic Women's Association— the women's wing of the CPI (M)* (Thangavelu 2016). The activists belonged to different caste as Krishnammal, Maniyammal and Sivaraman are upper-caste women who broke away from the shackles of the caste to fight for the Dalit women. Their presence in rehabilitating the victims validates Rege's (1998) argument to include Dalit feminist allies in the fight against gender and caste. Meena Kandasamy, is a prominent writer-activist belonging to the lower caste. The efforts of the activists are visible in the words of a survivor, "'it is only due to the continuous efforts of Krishnammal Jagannathan and her organisation called Land for Tillers' Freedom (LAFTI) that more families are now owning land,' said U Selvaraj, a resident of the village and one of the eye-witnesses of the incident" (Gunjan 2018). A newspaper report quotes Krishnammal,

> My husband and I travelled to Keezhvenmani the day after the incident. What I saw deeply disturbed me. I lived the life of Kilvenmani villagers,' said Krishnammal Jagannathan, who is now 92-years-old and lives in Chennai. . . For three years after 1968, she stayed with the villagers. In the days after the massacre, Krishnammal persuaded the landlord and negotiated 55 acres of land for the victims' kin (Gunjan 2018).

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The involvement of feminist activists and organizations underscores the need to integrate women into policy-making processes especially the ones related to land. They are better positioned to challenge and dismantle the creation and propagation of gendered spaces of caste that further leads to violence.

iv. Court Orders, Letters, Petitions

The court orders clearly show a caste bias as the verdict on the murder of an upper caste man (Pakkirisamy Pillai) and that of 44 Dalits drew different outcomes with the former case accused convicted while in the latter they were acquitted. This difference in judicial treatment in also mentioned in the newspaper reports,

> I was one of the accused. I was only five when this happened. We had to visit the police station and court every now and then while the landlords were acquitted back in 1975. Nothing was done to give us justice, said Kumaran. . . We had to move out of the village. Our homes were taken away from us. Our family members were killed, but nothing happened to the landlords. It took the court almost 15 years to decide our case. Took the court only 7 years when it came to upper caste members, said a villager who moved out after the massacre (Gunjan 2018).

Meena Kandasamy discusses the casteist verdicts by linking the socio-economic ties between class and caste in India (Kandasamy 2015).

Justice Venkataraman and Justice Maharajan of the Madras High Court decide to be astonished by the fact that the accused are landlords (mirasdars). Almost as if guilt cannot associate itself with the feudal lords. This is Class Analysis according to the Madras High Court. The equation they have derived is land ownership bestows upon men a merciful, non-gory nature. Even as a class-war is unfolding, this is the court's analysis, but please understand that class in India is never

about class alone. The landowning mirasdars also carry with them the traits of not just the rich, but also the dominant caste, the safe-players (Kandasamy 2015)

A similar reference to the legal injustices is made in *Heat* "[s]o many atrocities take place in our courts. The law is what the rich people lay down" (pp 38). Fictionalised form of the court orders and letters from people associated with the massacre are presented in *The Gypsy Goddess*. However, the court orders, letters and petitions that are available to the public via research articles and newspapers does not refer to any rape or other sexual/physical atrocities that were committed against the Dalit women as part of the massacre. Therefore, the impact of the same on the female survivors are not analysed, indicating that the gender aspect of the massacre is completely overlooked.

The letters and petitions written in the context of the massacre include the one by "Meenakshi Sundaram, a Kisan Sabha leader, to Dravida Munnetra Kazhakam (DMK) Chief Minister C. N. Annadurai, whose party had been elected to power the previous year, warning of the diabolic act in the planning of massacre, and asking for protection" (Menon 2017). Also, "the Thanjavur District Secretary of the agricultural workers association wrote to the then Chief Minister C Annadurai, seeking protection. The letter was acknowledged in January, a week after the massacre (Krishnakumar 2005). The letter was also published in *Theekadhir*, the political organ of the Communist Party of India Marxist (CPIM) Tamil Nadu wing – the only paper that covered the Keezhevnmani incident extensively" (Kanagasabai 2014). The fictional letter on the massacre in the prologue to the novel *The Gypsy Goddess*, shows the collaboration between the landlords and the State, "an official letter that Gopal Krishna Naidu (president of the Paddy Producers Association—a

collaboration of mirasdars [landlords]) writes to the Chief Minister highlighting the 'nefarious activities' (Kandasamy 2014, p. 6) of the communists as well as explaining the allegations of murder against him:

Although the Communist leaders and the gullible workers who follow them have trespassed on our lands, illegally harvested our crops and caused us immense suffering, we, as the members of the Paddy Producers Association, are committed to a policy of staunch non-violent opposition" (Kandasamy 2014, p. 7).

2.5 Conclusions – Space, Caste and Gender in the Kilvenmani Massacre

The chapter attempts to establish the relations among space, caste and gender in Dalit massacre using the case study of the Kilvenmani massacre. Both fictional and non-fictional narratives are used to understand the female experiences of the massacre. Fictional texts provide insights into subjective experiences while non-fictional texts help in setting the historical context and factual details. A combination of these sources enabled a multifocal feminist geo-centered exploration of differences in experiences of caste-based female geographies of the massacre. In order to conduct a comprehensive analysis of a massacre, it is important to look at the events before, during and after the massacre. The initial study began with identifying the cultural (caste), political (rise of CPIM), and economical (low wages) factors before the event that eventually led to the massacre. The events during the massacre consisted of arson, murder, and rape carried out by the upper caste landlord and his henchmen. The state, judiciary and the police force were silent perpetrators who facilitated the massacre. Following Fuchs (2020) concept, the survivors of the massacre continued fighting for their

fundamental rights and this resulted in land redistribution after the massacre.

The next step consisted of identifying the female survivors – fictional and historical representations. While locating the female survivors of the Kilvenmani massacre, we comprehended the importance to move beyond the female survivors and to acknowledge the efforts of the women politicians, writers and activists who played significant roles in both attempting to prevent the massacre, as well as to subsequently rehabilitate the survivors after the massacre. The participation of upper-caste feminist activists aligns with Rege (1998), Vandana (2021) and Paik's (2017) argument for the inclusion of higher-caste perspectives in Dalit feminist theory, movements, and activism. The female experiences of the massacre – real, fiction, upper caste and lower caste are marked by a 'politics of difference' (Guru 1995). Dalit women experience the 'triple burden' (Chakravarti 2018) of caste, class, and gender during the massacres as opposed to the upper caste women who are protected from caste-based violence. Upper caste women, on the other hand, can become silent or active perpetrators of Dalit massacres as pointed out by Teltumbde (2010). Nevertheless, the upper caste female experiences of the massacre are not represented in the narratives thereby making it difficult to understand their role in the massacre. The differences in upper caste and Dalit female experiences sheds light on the intersectional identity of Dalit women that cannot be contained within the homogenous category of 'women'. The real and fictional female survivors of the narratives also showed intersection of spatial experiences especially in terms of gender-based violence.

When it comes to space, both visual and textual media utilize real or fictional settings depending on the authors' intentions to sidestep controversies. Blending fiction and reality not only catered to

the political sensitivity, fearing backlash from various caste groups but also resulted in the creation of implied geography (the site of the massacre is implied in the narratives). The massacre is either used as the main plot or as a subplot. There are direct (*Aravindhan*) as well as indirect references (*Virumaandi*) to the massacre. It is also interesting to note that while the textual narratives contain greater descriptions and information about the massacre and the survivors, filmic portrayals tend to allude to the massacre casually, without exploring its core events. Most narratives also depict the creation of gendered spaces of caste (lower caste and upper caste female spaces) as a result of the spatial segregation in Tamil Nadu (at times using mythical female metaphors). Caste based spatial segregation resulting in spatial hierarchy (Ambedkar 1935) and geographical differentiation apartheid in south Indian villages are denoted here (Spate 1952).

Caste, space and gender of the authors determined the portrayal of the female survivors in their writings. Guru's (2017) argument for lived experience as a pre-requisite to theorise on Dalits is evident here as Dalit female authors who resided closer to the site of the massacre were able to connect with and gather more survivor experiences as compared to others. Therefore, writers and researchers should strive for a *Dalit feminitude* (drawing from Punia's 2023, concept of *Dalitude*) while analysing Dalit female experiences of massacres. Dalit feminitude refers to a new political movement and analytical device that uses a combination of lived experience and allyship to advance Dalit feminist and anti-caste movements and activism.

The literature review on the massacre conducted as part of this study revealed that the focus of the current scholarship on the massacre is mostly restricted to the analysis of *The Gypsy Goddess*, i.e., the fictional chronicle of the massacre, and also on the incidents during the massacre. This highlights the dearth in research on the cultural aspects

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(such as caste and gender) that led to the massacre and the non-fictional narratives. The absence of research on the non-fictional narratives demonstrates a pressing necessity to undertake this research.

In this study I have attempted to include such details to the best of my efforts while focusing on the space, gender and caste relations that were in operation before, during and after the massacre. A striking commonality in the narratives is the replacement of real female activists with fictional male protagonists in mainstream narratives which ignored the contributions of feminist activists and organisations. The aftermath, court verdicts and murder of the perpetrator, post the massacre are portrayed in the fictional narratives, with Kandasamy and Poomani exploring the consequences and the plight of the Dalits after rebelling against the caste system. The review of additional literatures related to the massacre such as court orders, letters and petitions showed the caste and gender discriminations that is deep-rooted within all spheres of the Indian society. The difference in the Indian justice delivery mechanism based on the caste hierarchy is also evident in some of the fictional narratives, "if killing someone meant going to prison, then the ginning factory owner [an upper caste] should have gone first" (Poomani 2019, p. 201).

The aggregate study confirms the hypothesis about the existence of a relation among caste, gender and spatial location in Dalit massacres. The caste identity (of being a Dalit) determines the spatial location of the female survivors which in turn render them more susceptible to gender and caste-based violence during the massacres. In India we can see that the caste identity (here Dalit) determines the geospatial location of the Dalit (concept of *cheri* or slum is an example for this) as a result of the socio-spatial segregation or spatial inequality inherent in the caste system (Patel 2022). The Dalits in India are often pushed to the outskirts of villages as a result of caste-based segregation

resulting in concentrating the population in one particular space. This caste-space relation makes the Dalit women exposed to gender and caste-based violence as it facilitates the perpetrators' ability to discover and injure their victims. Through the case study of the Kilvenmani massacre this chapter is able to foreground the cased based segregation from the facet of gender as well. On close reading the maps created as part of this study, we can see that Dalit women were located and clustering together in specific places resulting in the creation of Dalit feminine spaces like Kilvenmani and Satyapuri whereas upper caste women were located in safer spaces away. Such spaces make the Dalit women more vulnerable to large scale violence, both physical and sexual. Furthermore, even when the Dalit women and the upper caste women existed together, their spatial experiences where different due to their caste identity. Though both the women communities experience gender-based violence the latter were innocuous from caste-based violence.

Elimination of the caste-based spatial segregation in Indian villages, would prevent the large-scale caste-based, and gender-based violence against the Dalits. Dr Ambedkar had suggested that the Dalits and the marginalised communities should move to "cities and urban centres for livelihood as well as anonymity" (Patel 2022). However, this does not solve the problem as social reforms that eliminate caste in the rural India will be the only solution to reducing the number of Dalit massacres in India. One viable method to prevent Dalit massacres and other caste-based atrocities would be to eliminate the spatial segregation by mixing the population – Dalits and non-Dalits – thereby making it difficult to locate them in huge numbers. "The process of democratization requires alterations to social and well as political spaces and institutions" (Gorringe 2016). The state should therefore ensure the integration of the upper and the lower caste by enforcing strict laws that facilitate homeownership in prominent so-called upper

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caste areas by lower caste (Vakulabharanam and Motiram 2023). Creation of caste free public spaces can also help with the elimination of case based spatial segregation.

As Dalits in Tamil Nadu have mobilized politically, they have challenged the hierarchical nature of social space in the face of much backlash, seeking to create meaningful public spaces that are open to, and representative of, all castes (Gorringe 2016).

With respect to gender, women and their purity or honour preserved through endogamous marriages are seen as the vehicles of caste system (Chakravarti 2018). The state should promote exogamous marriage in an effort to slowly eliminate caste practices in India as opposed to endogamous marriages that are promoted by the caste system. Also, upper caste women can be active agents with a stake in preventing the massacres if empowered to rise above patriarchy. The patriarchal norms of the casteist Indian society generally forces upper caste women to act as silent (or at times as active) perpetrators in Dalit massacres (Teltumbde 2010). If upper caste women are not pressurised to adhere to the gender norms and caste rules then they might not be acting as perpetrators. Thus, eradication of space, gender and caste relation can result in the creation of a safer spaces for Dalits especially Dalit women.

The lack of proper documentation of the massacre resulted in the creation and circulation of different narratives by different sources, developing "multiplicity of narratives" (Kanagasabai 2014) around the death count and year of the massacre. Even such narratives lack a gendered perspective showing a pressing necessity to undertake the research on the role of space, gender, and caste in the massacre. In this study we have attempted to highlight such issues using feminist geocriticism and digital cartography. we believe that this study can help further the discourse on Dalit female experiences, undertaken by

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the Dalit writers and theoreticians, from the Dalit massacre standpoint. The mixed methodology of feminist geocriticism and digital cartography or feminist geocritical GIS is a powerful analytical tool that can unravel the female narratives of Dalit massacres in Independent India resulting in the creation of Indian feminist GIS projects. The next chapter applies feminist geocriticism and digital cartography to analyze the Marichjhapi massacre (1979) as a second case study.

Chapter 3

Fictional and Factual Echoes of Space, Caste and Gender: Case Study II – the Marichjhapi Massacre (1979)

It is impossible to provide any documentary evidence to prove that institutional casteism might have worked behind the Left Front policy in Marichjhanpi. We can only pose a counter-factual question: if the settlers were Banerjees, Mukherjees, Boses, Mitras, Senguptas, and Dasguptas or in other words, if they belonged to the three traditional higher castes of Bengal who mostly constituted the elite 'bhadralok' [upper-caste], would the responses of the government and the civil society be the same? The answer, we think, should be an emphatic no. And there lies the caste factor, which should impel the 'savarna bhadralok' to introspect about their latent casteism that remains deeply embedded in their overtly elitist culture.

- Bandyopadhyay and Chaudhury, Caste and Partition in Bengal.

This chapter applies the mixed methodology of feminist geocriticism and digital cartography to the second case study – the Marichjhapi massacre (1979) to understand the space, caste and gender relations in the massacre.

3.1 Introduction

The Marichjhapi massacre (also referred to as 'Morichjhapi' or 'Marichjhanpi' or 'Morichjhanpi' massacre) took place in 1979, in West Bengal (Mallick 1999; Chowdhury 2011, p. 668). The Bengali Hindu Dalit refugees from East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), who settled in the Marichjhapi island of Sunderbans after the partition of India, were forcefully evicted from the island by the police force under the left government between May 14th and May 16th of 1979 (Mallick 1999). The massacre is often compared to the Jallianwalla Bagh massacre, the largest in Indian history (Mallick 1999; Chowdhury

2011; Byapari and Mukherjee 2018). It began with an economic blockade to the island on 26 January 1979 to dislocate the refugees (Bose 2010; Chowdhury 2011). When this attempt failed, it was followed by police firing resulting in the death of 663 people (Jalais 2005b, p. 2636). Women refugees were raped, tortured, and killed during the massacre (Mallick 1999; Jalais 2005b). "During the same time 24 women were raped and sexually assaulted. 128 people went missing, and hundreds injured and imprisoned" (Jalais 2005b). The actual number of fatalities of the event is still unknown, with different sources quoting dissimilar figures. Chatterjee (1992, p. 300) gave an estimate death of 17,000 whereas at least "4000 families were massacred in their fight against the state" according to Chowdhury (2011, p. 668). Conflicting reports on the number of fatalities and the limited public discussion surrounding the incident are presumed to stem from the media blackout (Jalais 2005b) and the state's refusal to acknowledge the massacre. The state's denial of the massacre also meant that there are no official archival documents on the massacre thereby rendering research on the massacre even more difficult.

Figure 14: Map on the Key Events in the Marichjhapi Massacre

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This study excludes research on the partition of Bengal though the massacre was a result of this partition (for the second Bengal partition in 1947 after the initial 1905 partition). Instead, we look at the studies on the political, economic and cultural events leading to, during and after the massacre to understand the relations among space, caste and gender in the massacre.

The Dalit refugees who moved from East Bengal to West Bengal were initially rehabilitated in Dandakaranya (in then Madhya Pradesh now Chhattisgarh) by the government of India (figure 14), but this attempt failed, because Dandakaranya was a semi-arid land covered with large jungles and swamps (Sengupta 2011, p. 105). Also, the "area was entirely and culturally different from that of the refugees" (Elahi 1981, p. 219). The Dalit refugees, who were mostly agriculturalists, refused to continue living in Dandakaranya due to its remote hilly areas and uneven rainfall (Sengupta 2011). Bandyopadhyay and Chaudhury (2022) provide an overview of the key reasons behind refugees' preference for the Sunderbans over Dandakaranya in their recent study. First, the refugees were familiar with the terrain as Sunderbans resembled their homeland, in Bagladesh – Barisal and Faridpur, both topologically and ecologically (240). Thus, the ecological, cultural and linguistic similitude attracted the refugees (227). Second, "they had caste and kinship ties with the local settlers" at Sunderbans (240).

After the dissatisfaction with their government rehabilitation in Dandakaranya, the Dalit refugees decided to migrate to the Marichjhapi island of Sunderbans which they perceived as their "natural cultural homeland" (Bandyopadhyay and Chaudhury 2022, p. 247). The movement of the refugees from Dandakaranya to Marichjhapi continued from 1959-71 (Byapari and Mukherjee 2018, p. 237). The Dalits were able to convert the deserted Marichjhapi island

into a functioning space with roads, schools and hospitals among other facilities (Halder 2019). Halder (2019) says, "Marichjhapi could have been a shining example of the entrepreneurial spirit of a band of Bengali Dalits" (11). This "self-rehabilitation" (p232) without any help from the government could have also caused their eventual massacre in 1979 as "[h]ere they could use their skills as pioneer cultivators and so did not need any financial help from the state" (Bandyopadhyay and Chaudhury 2022, p. 242).

Politically, the refugee rehabilitation process in Sunderbans was initially supported by the left-dominated opposition (Mallick 1999, p. 106), but upon gaining power the Communist government saw them as a "liability" (Chowdhury 2011). The initial support was offered by Jyoti Basu himself (later became the chief minister of Bengal), who "announced at a workers' meeting in Bhilai in Madhya Pradesh that the refugees from Dandakaranya could be resettled in the Sunderbans, and if elected his government would initiate that resettlement process" (Bandyopadhyay and Chaudhury 2022, p. 241). With the advent of the new left government, however, they cited different reasons, from caste to ecological conservation, to justify their decisions behind the refugee eviction (Mallick 1999; Chowdhury 2011). This reversal of policy was because: a) the leaders feared that such a resettlement would create an unwanted precedent of more refugee influx to the state thereby harming the economy of West Bengal, and b) Sunderbans was a Reserved Forest area with a Project to conserve Tigers since 1973 (Bandyopadhyay and Chaudhury 2022, p. 245). The ecology and conservationist arguments does not stand, according to Jalais (2005b), as "Marichjhapi was not even part of the tiger project and the Mangrove Forest had already been cleared in this part of the Sunderban and was replaced by a government-sponsored programme of coconut and tamarisk plantation" (Bandyopadhyay and Chaudhury 2022, p. 245,). In addition to the above factors both Annu

Jalais (2005b) and Ross Mallick (2024) indicates that the caste of the leftist leaders played a significant role in the reversal of policy of the state (Mallick 2024, p. 21). "Their argument is that while they [the left] speak these things, most of the leaders of the political left are upper caste and they get to fixate about lower caste Hindus who defy them and get settled in an island" (Mallick 2024, p. 21). This brings to light the caste-related factors underlying the massacre.

The caste identity of the refugees who settled in Marichjhapi played a significant role in their settlement in Marichjhapi, their eviction and subsequent massacre. The first two waves of refugees from East Pakistan "constituted mainly of the urban middle class and professionals, and rural middle class," who "with the help of their friends, relatives, caste members and other influential social networks, found a foothold in West Bengal, particularly in Calcutta" (Chakrabarti 1990 cited in Chowdhury 2011; Mallick 1993, p. 24, 129, Sen 2015). This caste based spatial access of the refugees is also pointed out by Anowar (2021) "the upper caste refugees who came earlier settled in Calcutta and its suburbs. They occupied government land, offices, and houses, and transformed them into *Jabardakhal* (squatter) colony" (4). Sengupta (2011) and Anowar (2021) also shed light on this caste-privilege. The last wave of refugees belonged to different castes like "Namsudra, Paundra, and Rajbansi, and some *adivasis* like Santhals" (Bandyopadhyay and Chaudhury 2022, p. 6) and sub-castes within the Bengali lower castes, such as "*Chanrals, Bagdis, Mochis, Bauris, Malos, Jeles, Dhobis, Doms, Kaibartyas* and so on" (Anowar 2021, p. 3) commonly referred to as 'Dalits'. Chowdhury (2011, p. 667) identifies the majority of the Marichjapi refugee settlers as belonging to the untouchable caste of 'Namasudras'. Sudras are the lowest in the caste hierarchy, after Brahmins (priests), Kshatriyas (warriors) and Vaishyas (Merchants) (Chowdhury 2011) and Namasudras are a sub-caste within the Sudra caste. They are an industrious agrarian

community with artisan skills. Sengupta (2011) also identified another set of lower caste refugee settlers, Poundra-Khastriyas, who were much less in number.

Namsudras were the last of the refugees to move to West Bengal due to their poor socio-economic conditions. Unlike the previously mentioned refugees, Namasudras lacked "family and caste connections" and so they had to "solely depend on the government for their survival" (Chowdury 2011, p. 667). Bandyopadhyay and Chaudhury (2022) therefore argue that "the refugee was not a homogenous sociological category of people united by their shared experience of displacement. While the experiences of dislodgement were the same, that of rehabilitation was not" (224). Even within the lower caste refugee communities, the ones that were in an economically better position were able to "self-rehabilitate" themselves in and around the city of Calcutta (Mallick 2024). The refugee settlement in Marichjhapi "was considered to be criminal trespass, while in the past squatter movement of the *savarna* (upper-caste) refugees in Calcutta was hailed as a noble dissent" (Bandyopadhyay and Chaudhury 2022, p. 245). Thus, the caste-identity denied Dalits access to prominent areas of West Bengal, like the capital city of Calcutta, thereby forcing them to re-locate to Dandakaranya and later to Marichjhapi, from where they were forcefully and violently removed (figure 1).

The victims' identities as Dalits and refugees worked against them. The Marichjhapi massacre is an example of Dalit claim for land ownership and subversion of caste hierarchies which eventually led to a massacre. Both the state and the central government never acknowledged the occurrence of the massacre. The central government's Scheduled Castes and Tribes Commission denied the occurrence of the massacre despite possessing knowledge about the

incident (Mallick 1999, p. 111). The press was prevented from reporting the massacre, the academicians and intellectuals remained silent and the government quashed the legal proceedings on the incident (Bandyopadhyay and Chaudhury 2022, p. 243,). Therefore, the massacre did not receive a space in history like the Jallianwala Bagh massacre and the Nazi holocaust, as the victims were Dalits consisting of the Namos (Namashudras), the Pods, the Jeles and not the privileged upper caste Brahmins, Kayasthas and Vaidyas (Byapari and Mukherjee 2018, p. 35; Anowar 2021, p. 6).

3.2 Background and Significance of the Study

On examining the research on Marichjhapi, "the incident (did not) find any mention in any academic publications till about 1990s, more than a decade and a half after the incident" (Chowdhury 2011, p. 670). Chatterjee's (1992) doctoral dissertation on the massacre, marked an end to this silence, but the dissertation is unpublished till date and we were unable to access it. Mallick (1999) is one of the early researchers to write exclusively and extensively on the massacre. While discussing the conflict between environmental conservation and refugee resettlement, his paper also addresses the caste issues behind the massacre. Additionally, the paper analysed the left government's opposition to refugees and specified the villages affected by police firings. Ross Mallick touches upon the reluctance of the academic Bengali community to address the massacre (Mallick 1999, p. 10). He therefore focused on delivering justice to the refugees and explored the ways in which the academic community could contribute to the same. It is crucial to note that the violence against women and the female experiences of the massacre is even more suppressed and forgotten within the academic community. In this paper we expand upon Mallick's efforts by incorporating the gender aspect of the massacre.

Ross Mallick (2024) also has an unpublished book on the Marichjhapi massacre entitled *An Untouchable Massacre*. The book is available on research platforms like *Academia* and *ResearchGate* as the author was unable to find a publisher for the book given the controversial nature of its contents. Mallick calls out the publishers who rejected his book, including Dalit journals and publishers, while highlighting the struggles he encountered in publishing a narrative against the casteist policies of the state. He elaborates on the political significance of the Namasudra caste as a vote base and how they were scattered and rendered voiceless after the partition as "destitute refugees" (Mallick 2024, p. 13). He uses the term "ethnic cleansing"/ "caste cleansing" to denote this political fragmentation. "The term was not [officially] used, but as the higher castes had the political and caste connections to remain in West Bengal, and the Untouchables did not, the effect was the same" (Mallick 2024, p. 25).

This book is important as it sheds light on the caste based differential treatment of the refugees by the state of West Bengal, the resilience of the Namsudra refugees and the betrayal of the left government. His research is also relevant as he was able to access and analyse government records and documents on the massacre using his family connections, that is not otherwise available to the public. He stresses the inclusion of the massacre in school curriculum (86) and the creation of an official museum on the survivors (142). Mallick is also critical of the absence of female narratives of the massacre. "There were plenty of people who could have done it, but after all the decades there was still no study on the politicized rape that occurred in Marichjhapi or for that matter in the rest of the state under Left Front rule. . . The mass rape and murder of women at Marichjhapi by police, CPM cadre and gangsters did not even get an investigation, let alone any hangings" (Mallick 2024, p. 123). Mallick blends his personal experiences with his professional struggles in examining the massacre,

continually revising and uploading his book to academic platforms to reflect the most recent research and stories surrounding the event.

Jalais (2005a) wrote about the unequal distribution of resources in West Bengal after partition where the Dalit refugees from East Pakistan who settled in Sunderbans were treated as "tiger food" (1758). Her work is a result of over two years of fieldwork in the islands of Sunderbans during which she was able to collect oral testimonies and evidences of the massacre from the survivors. The survivors also express their resentment of the caste-based discrimination that they had experienced from the Left government. Jalais (2005b) identifies the caste-based segregated spatial access of the refugees and dismantles the official argument of environmental conservation to evacuate the refugees. Mitra (2005), on the other hand, argued against the consideration of the event as a 'massacre' in his response to Jalais (2005b). He states,

> What happened at Morichjhanpi did not add up to such a phenomenon… as my recollection goes, no killings took place on the spot… Nonetheless, to describe what had then happened as a 'massacre' is nothing short of grotesque. Hyperbole does not add to, but detracts from scholarship (p. 2010).

As a response to Mitra, Jalais (2005b) elaborated upon the rationale behind considering the Marichjhapi killings as a massacre (stated in the beginning of this chapter). Jalais (2005b) quotes Raiharan Barui, the Secretary of UUS (Udbastu Unnayanshil Samiti/Refugee Welfare Committee) to give the death counts due to the blockade and police firing (14), and resultant Cholera and Typhoid (239), starvation (136), hunger (271) and suicide (3) to support her argument about the massacre nature of the event (p. 2636). She also looked at the violence against women in this paper when she mentions the rape and sexual assault of 24 women (Jalais 2005b).

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Meenakshi Mukherjee (2007) identifies the works of the Bangla Dalit writer Manoranjan Byapari who was born and raised in a refugee in which she stressed the importance of first-hand narratives of the massacre. Pradip Kumar Bose (2010), however, is the only one who looked at the gender issues of the refugees. Bose (2010) dealt with partition and refugee studies in general and not specifically the massacre victims. He recognizes the potential of the 'doubly marginalized' women refugee narratives to "cut across boundaries imposed by the state and break the homogeneity of state discourses by bringing in women's memory, experiences, recollections" (Bose 2010, p. 16). Further he adds,

> [r]esearches on organisations that emerged to address the issues of rehabilitation, property rights, eviction, and better infrastructural facilities and so on, show that they were particularly constrained by the lack of proper gendered perspective (Deb 2000). These organisations and movements for decent living standards for the refugees, did not even consider that women could have special needs and requirements (7).

Sengupta (2011) did an extensive study on the movement and settlement of the partition refugees in India from a caste angle. The focus of the article is on partition (and not the massacre) where she did an analysis of the Bangla novels dealing with the theme of the refugees. Only one novel, *Dandak Theke Marichjhapi [From Dandak to Marichjhapi]*, directly dealt with the massacre (Rajguru 1996). Chowdhury (2011) on the other hand identifies the importance of space or location in determining the severity and impact of the massacre along with other factors like caste and class among others. He states "geographical location of spaces has a lot to do with the formation of spatial identities and is decisive in shaping spatial justice" (664), and "the significance of the Marichjhapi massacre was heightened due to

its location on the Bengal-Bangladesh border" (666). Sen (2014) discusses the relationship between refugee memory and history in which the remembrance and erasures of certain memories are governed by the historical knowledges. The Bijoygarh squatter colony on the outskirts of Calcutta is analysed as a case study here to illustrate "how celebratory narratives regarding the establishment of squatters' colonies more often than not obscure the nature of refugee" (40).

Bandyopadhyay and Chaudhury (2017) brings back into discussions the caste equations of the refugees during partition which eventually led to their massacre in Sunderbans. He foregrounds the relations among identity, religion and space during partition that led to the differential treatment of the Dalit refugee communities, especially the Namasudras. The loss of political autonomy as a result of scattering the Dalit communities during their rehabilitation process, together with the disruption of their territorial anchorage after partition rendered the Dalits "the worst sufferers of Indian partition as after 1947 they had no land, which they could properly call their homeland" (261). In their book, Bandyopadhyay and Chaudhury (2022) further expand their research on caste and partition of Bengal to highlight the struggles of the Namasudra refugees and their experiences at the refugee camps as part of the rehabilitation endeavours of the Left government.

The epilogue of this book covers the events that led to the massacre including the reasons for the preference of Marichjhapi over Dandakaranya by the refugees (238-40) and the reversal of the left policy over the refugee rehabilitation in the Sunderbans (245). The massacre is described as an "extraordinary saga of violence against the human rights of the Dalit refugees" (19). They critique the "public silence and subsequent amnesia" surrounding the massacre and reiterates Jalais' (2005b) argument to consider the event as a massacre (244). They are the initial scholars to foreground the role of refugee

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Dalit women in claiming their rights during the refugee rehabilitation process:

> And in these acts of self-assertion [demanding relief and rehabilitation as a matter of right, not as an act of kindness], refugee women in many camps took the front position, indicating the coming of new codes of gender freedom. . . compared to their *bhadralok* [upper-caste elite] counterparts in the colonies of Calcutta, Dalit refugee women in the camps showed greater signs of autonomy and agency (Bandyopadhyay and Chaudhury 2022, p. 225).

Hassan (2021) reiterates this role refugee women who altered the existing notions about Bengali women identity as they were confined to domestic spaces until then.

> The emergence of refugee women from private space to public space brought about a profound shift in the thought and mindset of Bengali women as a whole and introduced a new dimension to their personality. Many refugee women returned to the domestic world as soon as their families were comfortably situated, financially and physically (3).

Such mentions about the refugee women of partition (as a homogenous category) led us to delve deeper into the intersectional identity of the women by examining the relations among space, caste and gender, especially in the context of the massacre. Hassan examines the Dalit refugee identity as portrayed in Bengal partition narratives (fiction and non-fiction) to underscore the caste-based differential treatments of the refugees by the government and in the refugee camps. He points out that studies on Bengal partition refugee narratives generally focus on the ones produces by the *bhadralok* while ignoring the narratives of the *chhotolok* (lower caste) (4). This is also because of

"Dalit narratives and perspectives are missing from mainstream Bengali partition narratives" (9).

The extensive studies conducted by Mallick (1999; 2024), Bandyopadhyay and Chaudhury (2017; 2024) enabled us to expand on the research on the Marichjhapi massacre by focusing on the significance of spatiality in the massacre from a fictional and gender standpoint. We found that there are research articles that directly focused on the massacre as well as articles that focused on refugee rehabilitation processes which eventual led to the massacre. The articles on the massacre mostly focused on the environmental issues, policy making and caste issues behind the massacre. The interrelations among space, caste and gender in the massacre is ignored or are yet to be studied. Females and their role in the revolt against the police brutality were also generally overlooked though there are generic studies that mention the role of refugee women in demanding rehabilitation after the partition. Thus, the massacre is less studied in terms of the literary works (fictional and non-fictional) and even less in terms of the female historical and fictional representations. The central focus of this chapter is on the female survivors of the Marichjhapi Massacre (1979) in West Bengal, consisting of both historical representations as well as fictional representations. An extended study of the massacre and its consequences on female survivors is done based on the principles of multifocality and polysensoriality of geocriticism where the latter refers to a comprehensive understanding of the place using multiple senses (Westphal 2007).

3.3 Materials: From Texts to Data

This study aims to foreground the female survivors of the Marichjhapi massacre, by hypothesizing a relation among space, caste, and gender in the massacre through the analysis of both the literary and non-literary narratives on the massacre. The first part of the study

consisted of collecting materials and the nature of the materials assembled lead to the second part i.e., the methodology. The materials gathered as part of this study include data compiled (manually scraped) from available online newspaper reports, English literary texts (both fictional and non-fictional) and research articles resulting in the creation of a database of the survivors. Both textual and visual narratives are analysed to obtain the survivor locations and their narratives as "individual memory needs to be complemented by literature and film as an archive of memory in the public sphere – a public, collective, and non-statist memory." (Bose 2010, p. 17). The selection of the texts is based on their direct or indirect references to the massacre. Fictional texts considered for the study are *The Hungry Tide* by Amitav Ghosh (2011) which has a direct reference to the massacre and the semi-fictional documentary photography *Where the Birds Never Sing* by Soumya Sankar Bose (2020). Non-fictional texts include the Oral History *Blood Island* by Deep Halder (2019), *Interrogating my Chandal Life – An Autobiography of a Dalit* by Manoranjan Byapari (2018), *Chap 6: Reconstructing Marichjhapi: From Margins and Memories of Migrant Lives* by Jhuma Sen (in *Partition: The Long Shadow* edited by Urvashi Butalia 2015).

Besides the database on the real and fictional survivors, a database on the camp locations and movement of the refugees and the location of the prominent writers on the massacre were also assembled via manual scraping, together with the analysis of the court orders, letters and petitions among others, on the massacre. The diverse nature of the materials compiled led to adoption of a mixed methodology that is a combination of feminist geocriticism and digital cartography to analyse the data. The qualitative data consisting of literary texts and documents are examined using qualitative content analysis through a feminist geocriticism. The quantitative data consisting of the database of survivor locations is

analysed using digital cartography tools like QGIS and ArcGIS online. Key attributes of the quantitative data include name of the survivor, location (latitude and longitude), caste and age (where available). This methodology was adopted to efficiently accommodate the materials collected and to utilize it to recognize the marginalized Dalit women narratives of massacres.

The next section gives a preview of the cartographic visualization (using QGIS) of the survivors along with its critical analysis. The maps thus created will serve as a spatial archive of the female survivors of the massacre. We aim to further the conversations on the female survivors by foregrounding their experiences both before and after the massacre through the archive. The larger study aims to create a spatial archive that locate the female survivors of selected Dalit massacres in India (Figure 15). It aims to be a novel mapping project in India that can also serve as a prototype for future projects.
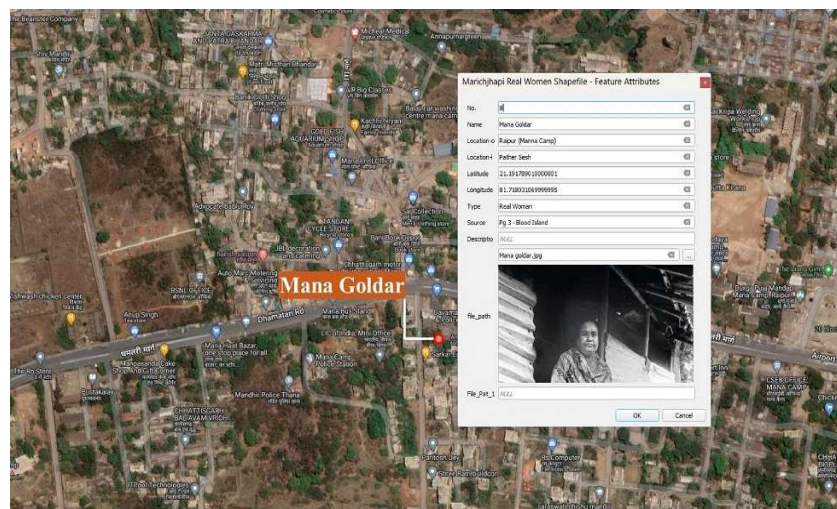
Figure 15: It is also Possible to Add Images (as Seen Above of the Survivor Mana Goldar) Against Varying Base Maps as Different Layers (Here the Base Map is Google Satellite Map)

Limitations of the data: There are several Bengali works on the massacre that are not included in this study as we focus

only on English texts. Some major Bengali texts that refer to the massacre are *Dandak Theke Marichjhapi* (From Dandakaranya to Marichjhapi) by Shatipada Rajguru, *Marichjhapi Naishabder Antoraley* (Marichjhapi: Under the Cover of Silence) by Jagadish Chandra Mondal, *Mahakavyer Marichjhapi* by Bibi Safalananda, *Marichjhapi Chhinna Desh, Chhinna Itihaash* (Marichjhapi: Disintegrated Land, Disintegrated History) by Madhumoy Pal and *Aprakashito Marichjhapi* (Unpublished Marichjhapi) by Tushar Bhattacharya.

3.4 Results and Discussions: Feminist Geocritical and Digital Cartographic Reading

3.4.1 Space, Caste and Gender in Dalit Massacres - Close Reading Fictional and Non-Fictional Texts

i. Fictional Survivors

1. *The Hungry Tide* (2011) by Amitav Ghosh

Amitav Ghosh's novel is extensively studied for its eco-critical and postcolonial perspective by Pablo Mukherjee, where he studies the characters as "operating under the sign of migration", in a constant state of "mobility, migrancy," and "uprootedness" (Mukherjee 2007, p. 150). While Ghosh continually critiques the government prioritising environment over humans (refugee, in this study we are only focusing on the portrayal of space, caste and gender in the context of the massacre. The novel is set against the fictional village of Lusibari in Sunderbans. Ghosh however makes use of both real and fictional settings, at times intersecting the two, in the novel as he maintains in his author's note. "The characters in this novel are fictitious, as are its two principal settings, Lusibari and Garjontola. The secondary locations, such as Canning, Gosaba, Satjelia, Morichjhãpi and Emilybari, do exist and were founded or settled in the manner

alluded to here." (Ghosh 2011, p. 348). Yet Ghosh defines the exact location of Lusibari, "Canning is the railhead for the Sundarbans and Lusibari is the farthest of the inhabited islands. It's a long way upriver — you have to go past Annpur, Jamespur and Emilybari. And there it is: Lusibari" (Ghosh 2011, p. 19). An attempt to locate Lusibari in real spaces is shown in the figures 16(a), (b) and (c). The main setting of Ghosh's novel, while entirely fictional, carries a feminist perspective, as it is named after Lucy Hamilton—a girl with a colonial heritage— where 'Lusibari' translates to 'Lucy's House' (Ghosh 2011, p. 42).

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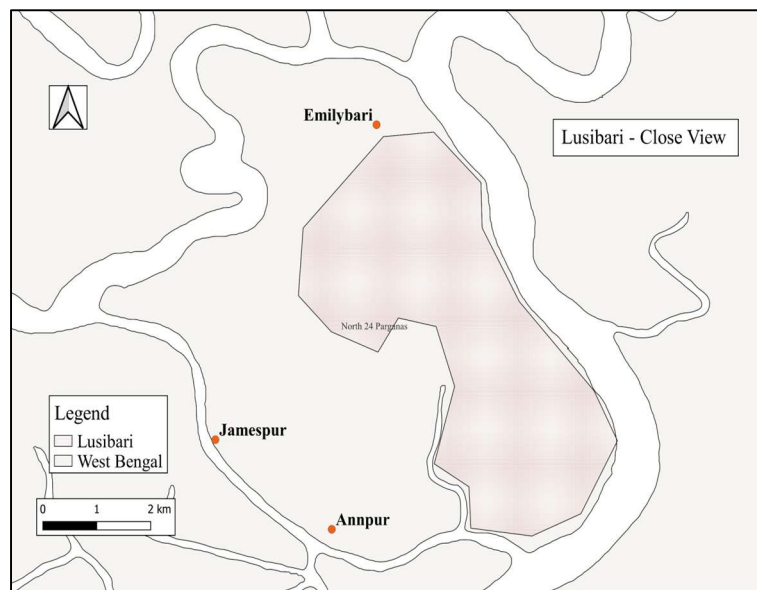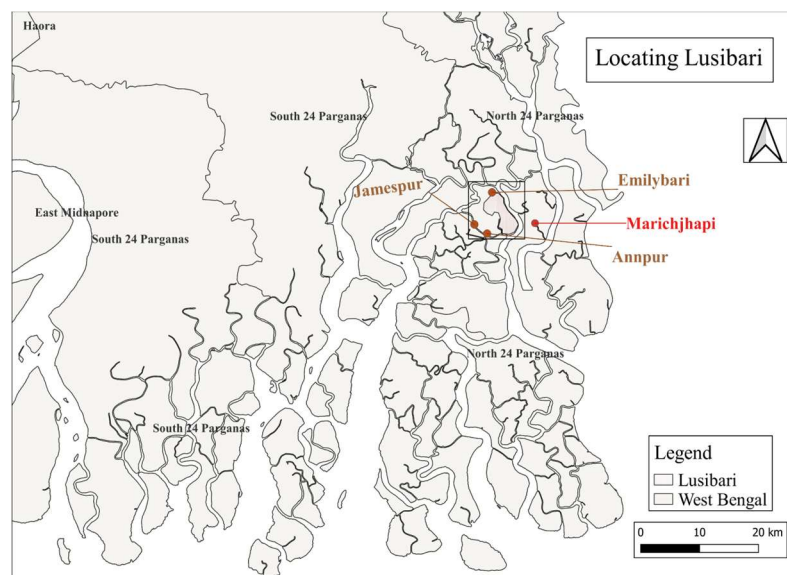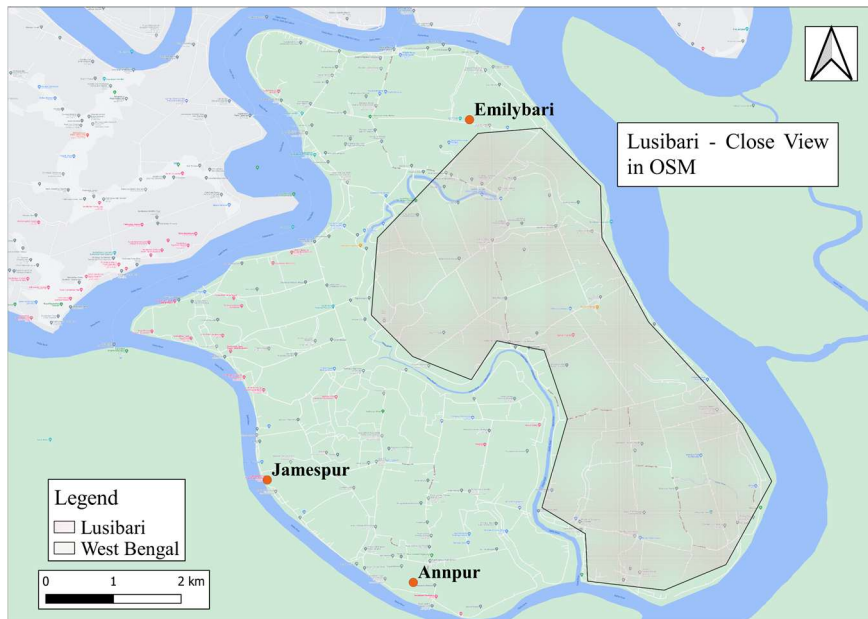
Figure 16: (a) Locating the Fictional Space of Lusibari; (b) Lusibari
Close View and (c) Lusibari in OSM Base Map

Lusibari is a complex fictional setting as, first, it shares proximity with the site of the massacre. Second, it is occupied by diverse groups of people, especially native lower caste refugee women widowed at a young age (Ghosh 2011, p. 79) as well as the upper caste. Third, the space also has colonial histories attached to it. Lusibari as a space, sheds light on the invisible relationship shared by women (gender) and their caste with land (space). While the land itself is named after a white woman, the lower caste women who occupy the same space are raped and massacred for their socio-cultural identity. Wrede's (2015) feminist geocritical notion of space as multiple, shifting and characterised by "difference" is evidently visible here as female experiences of the space is different based on their caste identity.

Kusum's experiences as a lower caste woman is understood better when read in comparison with Nilima Bose's, an upper caste, educated woman who single-handedly manages a hospital in Lusibari.

Though the caste of the female characters is not explicitly stated in the novel, their caste-based surnames reveal their identity. The caste-identity of the refugees is also explicitly referred in the novel when Nilima says, "most of them were Dalits, as we say now, Harijans, as we used to say then" (Ghosh 2011, p. 110). Both women were present on the island during the massacre, yet their socio-cultural identities shaped their distinct experiences. While Kusum had a first-hand experience of the massacre, where she witnessed both death and rape before losing her life in the massacre, Nilima was in a better position in Lusibari – though she bears the aftermath of the massacre via her husband's behavior (Ghosh 2005, 19). The latter also had the means to provide medical aid to the refugees but is hesitant to displease the system and the government. "Nilima had the hospital and the Women's Union to think of she could not afford to alienate the government. She had to consider the greater good" (Ghosh 2005, p. 113). The spatial location of the two women is shown in the figure 22. The Dalit feminist notion of differences in spatial/geographical experiences of women based on their caste identity becomes evident here. It is her Dalit refugee identity that places Kusum in the space of Marichjhapi which further led to her first-hand experience of the massacre while Nilima, the upper caste woman, was able to occupy the safe space – Lusibari. Lusibari therefore becomes a safe (fictional) space for the upper caste women whereas Marichjhapi, the real space, bears the trauma of the Dalit female experiences. Through this interplay between real and fictional spaces Ghosh explores the connections among caste, space and gender.

The female body and land are both depicted as the feminist geocritical carriers of traumatic memories, history, and culture in the novel. For example, Kusum's character introduces the massacre narrative in the novel and the place name 'Marichjhapi' evokes the trauma of the massacre in most people. The relation between gender

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and space is also revealed when Kusum refers to Marichjhapi as "home" (Ghosh 2011, p. 148), echoing the sentiments of all the refugees and women in particular who believed that "rivers ran in our heads, the tides were in our blood" (Ghosh 2011, p. 149). There are also multiple intersections between the historical and fictional representations of the female survivors. For example, Ghosh's Kusum resembles Mana Goldar, the real survivor from Deep Halder's *Blood Island* (Halder 2019). Kusum meets and shares her experiences with Kanai when the latter was a young boy, which parallels Halder's experience with Mana. It is Kusum who introduces Kanai to the massacre whereas Mana does the same with Halder. Marichjhapi therefore becomes a geographical code that evokes the female experiences of the massacre much like the tenets of feminist geocriticism.

Ghosh's fictional women are strong and independent, trying to make a life for themselves and the society at large, despite their caste and class differences. Kusum, Moyna Mandol, Piyali Roy, and Nilima Bose are some examples. Besides the fictional characters, Ghosh also introduces the mythical female character – Bon Bibi, "the goddess of the forest" (Ghosh 2011, p. 32). The history of the space, 'the tide country', is transmitted from one generation to the other via oral history i.e., through rhythmic songs about Bon Bibi which is by-hearted by the kids of the place. This mythical woman of Arabian descent (Ghosh 2011, p. 96), is all powerful as she is the "savior of the weak and a mother of mercy to the poor" (Ghosh 2011, p. 97). This is in stark contrast to the reality of the lower caste women on the island such as Kusum. Ghosh, like Kandasamy makes use of a mythical character of mixed inheritance to challenge the notion of 'purity' of caste.

The novel has a chapter on the massacre, entitled 'Morichjhapi'. The massacre experience is predominantly explored from a man's perspective – Nirmal, who was on the island during the massacre and had written about the same. However, Ghosh also attempts to explore the female experiences of the massacre. For example, the character Kusum allegorically becomes the embodiment of the massacre, as it is through her that the massacre is introduced in the narrative in addition to exploring the caste and gender relations of the massacre through her. Finally, Ghosh ends the novel with his thoughts on an alternative peaceful future for the refugees in Marichjhapi, had they not been removed forcefully. He says, "Was it possible that in Morichjhapi had been planted the seeds of what might become, if not a Dalit nation, then at least a safe haven, a place of true freedom for the country's most oppressed?" (Ghosh 2005, p. 172). This vision also raises the concern that led to this study – even if such a haven is established, will that place offer 'true freedom' for the country's doubly oppressed Dalit women?

2. Documentary Photography/Photobook: *Where the Birds Never Sing* (2020) by Soumya Sankar Bose

The documentary photography is an attempt to historically recreate the memories on the massacre through photographs of the deserted island and its survivors. It is available as a photobook as well as an online photo exhibition. This semi-fictional work effectively blends facts and fiction through mixing the pictures of real documents ("refugee rehabilitation application forms and ration card tokens, soiled photographs of the Dandakaranya refugee camp, and letters of appeal" among others, Mallik 2022, p. 64) and images related to the massacre with the artistic recreation of survivors, animals, objects and burning huts. The photobook is the culmination of years of research and is based on the oral histories of the real survivors. "It provokes us

to think about traumatic histories beyond the fixation on accurate representations and, instead, reflect upon the transformative potential of images in revisiting the past" (Mallik 2022). The images are set in Kumirmari islands (opposite to Marichjhapi in Sunderbans) but the project have transcended the limitations of a physical gallery or book. An extension of the work is exhibited in real space as the publishers *Experimenter Outpost* (2021), has brought the "project back to Kumirmari, Sundarbans, as a series of enlarged images that stand across from the Marichjhapi Island as witnesses of the unspeakable atrocities committed over forty years ago. The outdoor exhibition will remain installed until any future cyclone destroys it" (Bose 2020).

The visual narrative gives importance to the trauma of the female survivors set against the backdrop of the island (Bose 2020). The connections between land and women as evident in the other narratives of the massacre also gets explored in a visual format here. Bose offers "new modes of remembering a historically suppressed traumatic event after a caesura of time" (Mallik 2022, p. 64). The narrative is in the format of a collection of images that are mostly left unexplained and are open to the interpretations from the reader. For example, one image shows a woman walking towards the sea, the Bay of Bengal, alone, staring into the horizon. The identity of the woman is not revealed as she is photographed from behind, therefore she becomes a representative of the female survivors. The background of the seemingly calm sea and the woman with her inner turmoil foreground the impending doom that is about to destroy both. Another image depicts a woman ripped off sari, only in her blouse and skirt, on a tree wearing a bird face mask. The dark-skinned woman set against the tree (probably the Sundari tree of the Sunderbans), represents the violation that both Dalit refugee women and nature had to endure during the massacre that plagued them (as the plague doctors used to wear a bird face mask). A similar message is conveyed by the image

that shows both a woman lying face down and a tiger (on a tree) next to her, both washed against the shore after the massacre. While some of the images are recreated with professional actors, others have refugees themselves posing for the camera.

Bose (n.d.) also connects his work to the current political situation in India.

> Unfortunately, this inhuman and shocking incident is still very relevant. We need to look around the present scenario in India to realise that matters have not changed at all; that the partition and the massacre were just the beginning in a long line of similar incidents. The current issues concerning the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and The National Register of Citizens (NRC) in India will prove the point. Moreover, caste hierarchy is still an issue at present just as much as it was in the past (website).

ii. Non-Fictional Survivors or Historical Representations

1. Oral History: *Blood Island: An Oral History of the Marichjhapi Massacre* (2019) by Deep Halder

Blood Island, the only oral history of Marichjhapi massacre in English, has its settings varying in and around Bengal and the Sunderbans. The personal stories of the author Deep Halder, who hails from West Bengal and grew up listening to the narratives on the massacre, is interwoven with the narratives of the survivors. A survivor's statement reveals the preference for Marichjhapi over Dandakaranya for resettlement, "the topography of Sunderbans was like that back home" (Halder 2019, p. 151). Halder's work is significant as it sheds light on the survivor accounts of the police brutality during the massacre which consisted of gang rape, firing and unlawful torture of the refugees who were fleeing for their lives.

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Though the recollections of most of the survivors are repetitive, the narratives serve as a means to authenticate the events that unfolded during the massacre.

Mana Goldar is the only female survivor of the nine survivors interviewed. Mana is the representative of the female experiences at Marichjhapi as she witnessed and survived rape and other atrocities during the massacre. The land and gender connections in the massacre memories are highlighted through Mana. Mana is directly an embodiment of a female identity who is fated to bear the trauma of the massacre for her lifetime as her very name is derived from one of the prominent refugee camps in Dandakaranya – Mana Camp (Halder 2019, p. 3). Born at a squatter's colony she came to live with Halder at the age of thirteen. Her relation to the massacre and her identity as a refugee is invariably linked to the physical spaces that she has occupied as a Dalit refugee woman. Such spaces consist of the refugee camp in which she was born to the various transit camps where she stayed as an adult. Later she migrated to Marichjhapi where she witnessed and survived the massacre on-site. Finally relocating to her current location at "Pather Sesh", meaning "Road's End", in the South 24 Parganas of Bengal.

The book highlights the caste angle of the eviction by foregrounding the Namasudra voices. This caste issue further sheds light on the double marginalization of Dalit women who were persecuted for both their caste and gender identity in the spaces that they occupied. Though Mana is the only female survivor interviewed there are accounts of rape and death of women in the recollections of the male survivors (3).

> The central reserved police had taken away a girl from their gang. Unlike Paunder's sister, she had lived to tell the story of that night. They had taken turns to rape her, then dropped her

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back in the morning. The camp residents had gone to protest, only to be lathi-charged back to the camp (45-46).

The female survivors are mostly unnamed in contrast to their male counterparts and are referred in relation to men. Aaynamoti from Gopalgunj, Paunder's sister and mother, and Nabakumar's mother, are some women mentioned in the book (Halder 2019, p. 33, 40). Most of these women were raped and killed according to the interviewees. One survivor narrates the incident when women were taken away from Marichjhapi by police (Halder 2019, p. 66). Another instance of female experience in the text is the gang rape of three health officers in Bantala as recollected by the author upon his visit to the place (166). Three boats of women were drowned intentionally by police leading to killing and raping of Dalit women during the massacre (135). After this incident the refugees came to know "that a few women were picked up by the policemen themselves on the launches. They were taken to the nearest police station, gangraped for days and then released" (136).

2. *Interrogating my Chandal Life – An Autobiography of a Dalit* (2018) by Manoranjan Byapari

The massacre is not the central theme of *Interrogating my Chandal Life-An Autobiography of a Dalit* by Byapari and Mukherjee (2018) but it forms a part of the writer's life and identity as a Dalit refugee. The massacre is seamlessly woven into the autobiography as Byapari belonged to "Namashudra, that caste group which had earlier been called Chandal" (p42), the same caste group that was brutally massacred in Marichjhapi. Byapari's father had moved from Dandakaranya to Marichjhapi along with other East Bengal refugees where his father was beaten by the police until his ribs broke (235). Hence, he has personal stakes for writing about the massacre. He describes the massacre as,

Marichjhapi. A ruthless saga of massacre and rape, arson and plunder that is comparable to the likes of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre. Perpetrated by the state on a small, riverine island nearly forty years ago, the brutality of the violence would be difficult to match in the annals of human history (236).

The autobiography sheds light on the caste, space, and gender relations of Dalits. For example, Byapari explains how inter-caste marriages, usually perceived as a method to eliminate the caste system, are controlled by the upper caste people by guarding "female chastity…with much severity" (Byapari and Mukherjee 2018, p. 8) that is by not allowing females to marry outside their caste thereby revealing the caste-gender relations. Byapari (2018) also refers to the caste-based spatial segregation of villages, "the Shastras also ordain that the habitations of Chandals should be distant from the village" (8). The text is significant in its descriptions of the hardships faced by the East Pakistani refugees who were forced to migrate to "an unknown geographical entity called 'India'" where they faced climate change, poverty and even lack of proper sanitation facilities (17). Byapari explicitly mentions the caste-based differential treatment of the refugees when he states, "a group of people from the same land and fleeing for the same reason at the same time, and yet how cruelly different the treatment of one from the other. . . The question that arises naturally in these circumstances is this: why did the ruling people have such different reactions to two groups of people? I believe what lies behind this is the centuries old hatred born of the varna system" (35).

Under such circumstances, the Dalit women refugees underwent more difficulties. Similar to *Blood Island*, this text also has a chapter entitled 'Marichjhapi' (chapter 14), in which Byapari describes in detail the complete resettlement process and the massacre

from an East Bengali refugee perspective. The author attempts to draw connections among gender, caste and space. He describes the gendered experiences of Dalit women who were unable to cater to their traditional role as care-givers. "A mother, driven insane by her son's constant crying for food, threw him away into a well. The well was dry and the child survived" (27). Though Byapari refers to the experiences of several Dalit female survivors located in and out of Dandakaranya refugee camps, the main female survivors of this work are his mother and sister. They did not have direct experiences of the massacre as only his father had left for Marichjhapi from Dandakaranya. They are not named but their refugee experiences in camps are explored in detail in the text. Bypari refers to the hardships that his mother had to endure to sustain their family while fighting against hunger, poverty and lack of resources in camps.

> I have seen my mother living the life of a rat in its dark hole, unable to step outside into the sun shine when the cold and dank interior chilled her. I have seen my sister die of starvation, and watched helplessly my three other siblings exhausted by malnutrition and fasting. My aged grandmother went around the market collecting rotten or worm-eaten potatoes and egg plants and papayas. Trying to squeeze what little nourishment she could from these rejected food stuff (37-38).

Bypari uses precise figures of death (2000) and rape count (200), unlike other reports that are vague about them. The autobiography serves as an archival record of Bengal partition as Byapari touches upon events like the 1947 Bengal Partition, the 1959 Food Riots of Calcutta, Dandakaranya project of 1958, 1962 Indo-China War, 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War, 1972 Naxalite War, and the 1979 Marichjhapi Massacre.

3. *Chap 6: Reconstructing Marichjhapi: From Margins and Memories of Migrant Lives* (2015) by Jhuma Sen (in *Partition: The Long Shadow* edited by Urvashi Butalia)

The chapter is important to this study as it emphasizes the importance of preserving the Dalit refugee experiences of partition by filling the gaps in remembering the massacre. It gives a brief introduction to the events preceding, during and after the massacre. In terms of settings, Sen identifies the original locations of the lower caste refugees, "they were the Namasudras, earlier known as the Chandals of Bengal, who lived in Dacca, Bakarganj, Faridpur, Mymensingh, Jessore and Khulna in East Bengal" (130). Sen also highlights the caste-based spatial discrimination of the Dalit refugees by the government. They were relegated to

> uninhabitable camps in districts of 24 Parganas, Nadia, Burdwan, Midnapore or Cooch Bihar, or forced to settle in inhospitable tracts of Dandakaranya and the Andaman Islands. . . The Namasudras had been at the receiving end of calculated state-practised discrimination bordering on caste preferences and bargaining power. . . Admittedly, of the 389 refugee colonies that the government had set up, not a single one was in Calcutta" (130-131).

This should be read against the "smooth sail to legalization" (130) of the 149 unauthorised squatter colonies of the *bhadralok*. Sen's chapter is also a rich source of letters by and for the refugees written in the context of the massacre.

The Dalit female experiences of the massacre are touched upon in a chronological order – before, during, and after the massacre. Before the massacre, Sen refers to the incident in which three women of Kumirmari were, "left in a precarious condition due to tear gas post

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the attack of boats on January 1979" (145). The incident occurred while the refugees attempted to gather food and water from the nearby village of Kumirmari during the period of forced economic blockade. Sen cites that during the massacre, "the police began to rape the helpless young women at random. At least several hundred men, women and children were said to have been killed in the operation and their bodies dumped in the river (Mallick 1999)." (p145). The segregation of men and women during the massacre is also mentioned (145). Sen is the only source that mentions the presence of 250 female police officers in the island during the massacre (p147) which means that women were also perpetrators in this brutal act of violence.

Sen identifies the reasons behind the massacre as "partition, migration, questions of caste, ecology and discriminatory refugee policy, and finally the reversal in policy adopted by the left front government in West Bengal" (128). According to Sen, "Marichjhapi could have been an ideal model to be emulated for refugee rehabilitation and resettlement" (p142). She is also critical of the large amount of literature on the massacre that came up after the Nandigram and Singur violence. She sees it only as an attempt to degrade the left government and not favoring the cause of the refugees. She quotes Shailen Chakravorty here, "post-Nandigram phase, the same Marichjhapi became an 'item' to be appropriated by everyone in the new anti-Left wave" (149).

4. Online Newspaper Articles

Newspaper reports (online) collected in the year 2020 is analysed here to understand the representation of female narratives of the massacre. The selected articles are obtained using the following keywords in google search: "marichjhapi massacre", "marichjhapi massacre newspaper reports", "marichjhapi", "female survivors of marichjhapi massacre", and "online articles on marichjhapi massacre".

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The news section in google browser is also consulted. The major findings are:

a.) *Coverage of the massacre shows a reluctance from mainstream media outlets to report on the massacre*

The analysis of online newspaper reports shows a general reluctance by the 'mainstream' newspapers in India to cover the massacre. Most of the recent reports on the massacre are from online independent, crowdsourced newspapers like *The Print* and *The Wire* among others. *The Wire* has a dedicated series on Bengal violence ("#Bengal Violence Series") which also covers Marichjhapi in detail (Sengupta 2018). There is intertextual reference to the fictional and non-fictional works on the massacre with *The Wire* highlighting the indifference of conventional litterateurs to Dalit Bengali writings on the massacre. "Shaktipada Rajguru's novel *Dandak Theke Marichjhapi* (1980-81) is the only full-length novel in Bengali that talks of Marichjhapi with candour. However, it is also not surprising that this novel has remained out of print for many years and it has never been part of the mainstream literary canon in West Bengal" (Sengupta 2018).

b.) *There is a recurring pattern in how the massacre is reported across these articles - Commom Threads and Bias*

The newspaper reports mostly focus on the history of events that led to the massacre as well as the events during the massacre. The caste angle of the massacre, involvement of CPI(M), police violence, and lack of legal justice for the victims are the common themes that are discussed. The newspaper reports are also mostly biased with an evident propaganda against the left which is used to influence upcoming elections succeeding the time of publication. The use of phrases like "Laal Salaam Massacre", "Left-Massacre" are examples for this.

c.) *Female survivor narratives are minimal*

The existing articles rarely identify the names of female survivors though there are multiple narratives of male survivors. The articles are mostly written by men and very rarely by women mostly upper caste. There are multiple articles on books related to the massacre like *The Hungry Tide* and *Blood Island*. One survivor, Malati Jotdar, who seldom shares her experience at Marichjhapi with others, fearing she might be sent back to refugee camps again, describes the loss of her three children in Dandakaranya and later three more in Marichjhapi (Bhattacharya 2011). Her traumatic experiences are scattered across Marichjhapi and Dandakaranya and yet she still lives close to these spaces in Shantigachhi village of Lahiripur in Gosaba block of South 24-Parganas, Sunderbans as reported in the newspaper article.

The newspaper articles reiterate the rape and other sexual violence on women that are also mentioned in the other sources analysed in this study. "Some women were allegedly picked up by the policemen on the launches, taken to the nearest police station, gang-raped for days and then released" (Information Desk 2020). Another instance of violence on women is described by Mitra (2011), "The police entered the house and killed the women by stripping them naked in the name of search".

d) *Coverage of the massacre intensifies around its anniversary. There are references to spaces related to the massacre.*

In general, there is a surge in the number of articles on the massacre in 2019 because of the Lok Sabha elections of West Bengal. The newspaper reports are a rich source for identifying the refugee camps and refugee movements. Hasnabad, Netaji Nagar, Kadambagachhi, Malatipur, Barasat and Marichjhapi colonies near Barasat and railway tracks in Sealdah are some of the important places related to the massacre scraped from newspaper reports.

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e) *Post Massacre Scenario*

Most of the real survivors still live in and around Marichjhapi. With respect to the women who died at Marichjhapi, the police probe is still pending as in the case of Meni, the only officially recognised death at Marichjhapi (Bhattacharya 2011). So, both the living and the dead women of Marichjhapi are still awaiting justice and continue to live within the spaces where they suffered and continue to suffer the trauma of the massacre. "To date, the citizenship issue of refugees, including those who survived Marichjhapi, is still pending, even under the Mamata Banerjee-led TMC rule" (Mandal 2019).

3.4.2   Convergence and Divergence: Comparison of Survivors and Spaces
i. Real and Fictional Survivors

The following themes are identified from the close reading of the selected texts using feminist geocriticism and digital cartography.

Female Survivors – Anonymity and Fictional Location

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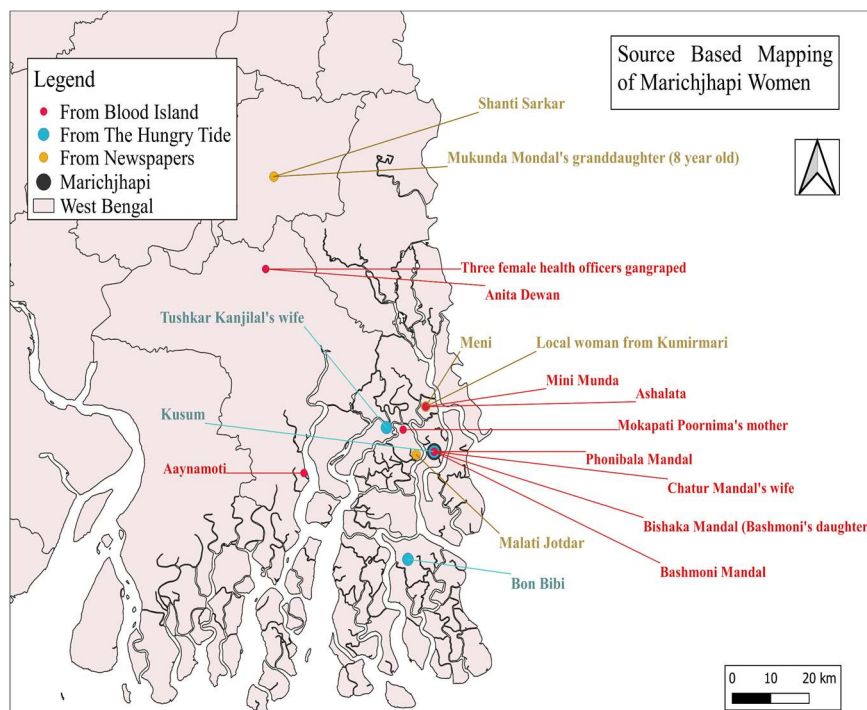
Figure 17: Source-Based Mapping of the Women of the Marichjhapi
Massacre

It is difficult to identify the names of the real survivors as most survivors were denoted based on their cultural identity (e.g., as some man's daughter, wife, or sister) in the materials that were consulted for this study. There is a general tendency to homogenise the female experiences of the massacre through this anonymisation and a reluctance to adopt an intersectional approach that takes into account the differences in caste and gender-based experiences. In *Blood Island* there are multiple instances where this anonymity of the female survivors and the reasons for it are mentioned. For example, "Paunder's sister has become her only identity", "no one really knew her name or bothered to ask about it after she became Chatur Mandal's wife" (Halder 2019, p. 40, 70). Also, the latest location of many of the survivors are unknown. Some of the real survivors are located in Kumirmari, Satjelia and Gosaba, (Jalais 2005b, p. 2458,), three islands that are close to Marichjhapi as seen in figure 18. Post massacre the female survivors are still located close to the site of the massacre indicating that they are still not rehabilitated or compensated for their loss. They continue living in close vicinity to the space where they had to endure the trauma of a lifetime.

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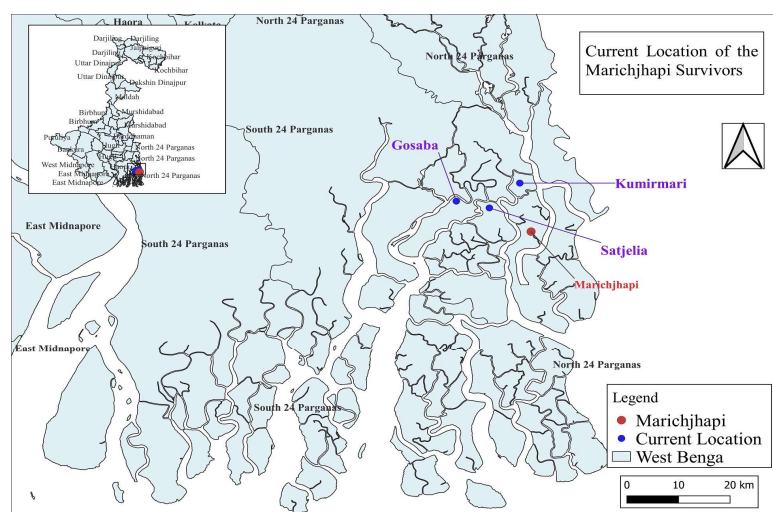
Figure 18: Current Location of Survivors

Identifying the fictional survivors, on the other hand, is relatively easier but locating them in real places was difficult as most of them were placed in the fictional space of Lusibari. Figure 19 (a) also reveal that while the real survivors were scattered in the states of West Bengal, Orissa and Chattisgarh, the fictional women were mostly confined to the Sundarbans especially Lusibari and Marichjhapi. This narrows the fictional representation of Dalit female experiences to one space alone in this study. Consequently, the intersection between the real and the fictional survivors occurs mainly in the space of Sundarbans, specifically near Marichjhapi, Satjelia, Gosaba, Kumirmari and Hamilton islands (figure 19b). Besides the intersection of real and fictional characters in specific spaces, we can also see the intersections between real and fictional character descriptions as in the case of Kusum and Mana Goldar.

From the available data visualization, it is easy to conclude that first the number of fictional representations of the women is lesser than the historical representation. Second, the lower caste women who were affected by the massacre are more largely represented and they were located close to the site of the massacre as compared to the upper caste women (less data is available on the upper caste women both in fictional and non-fictional works) who occupied comparatively safer geographical location. This also elucidates the caste-based geographical division of spaces in West Bengal which in turn led to caste-based massacres (using arson and police firing) thereby rendering lower caste women more vulnerable. Figure 22 show that it is difficult to obtain data on upper caste survivors (if any) compared to the lower caste ones indicating the importance of caste in the massacre.

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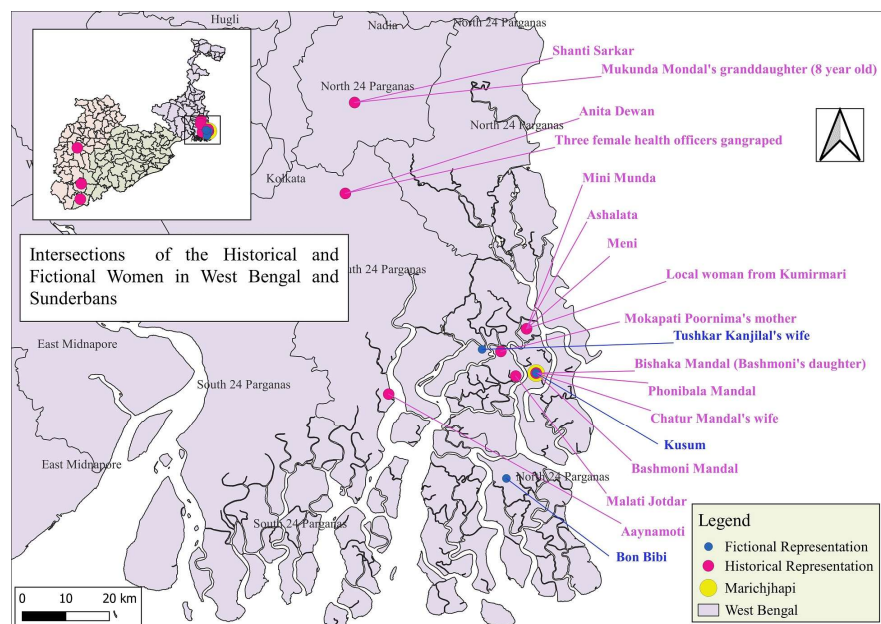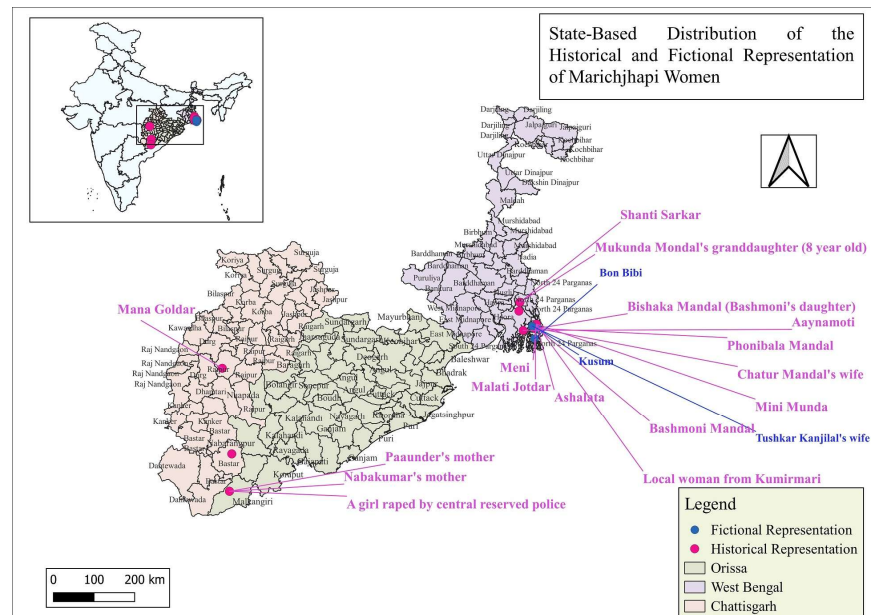
Figure 19: (a) Location of the Real Female Survivors of Marichjhapi and Their Fictional Representation in the States of West Bengal, Orissa and Chattisgarh; (b) Map Shows Intersections of Real Women and Their Fictional Representations in West Bengal and Sunderbans

Figures 20 and 21 (a), (b) shows the mapping of same data over an open street map (OSM) layer and a georeferenced 1967 map of India obtained from the David Rumsey map collection (Pergamon

Press 1968). The same data when embedded in the spatial archive, enables the readers to switch between and analyze the data from different spatio-temporal aspects and raise new questions about the visualized data. However, the 1967 map however does not provide a detail spatial orientation as compared to OSM. The OSM map facilitates deep navigation to understand the rural divisions within the Sunderbans along with the proximity of the survivors to the site of the massacre.

The intersection of the real and the fictional female survivors also lead to the presence of a possible 'third space' where a hybrid of the real and the fictional spaces (and survivors) coexists.
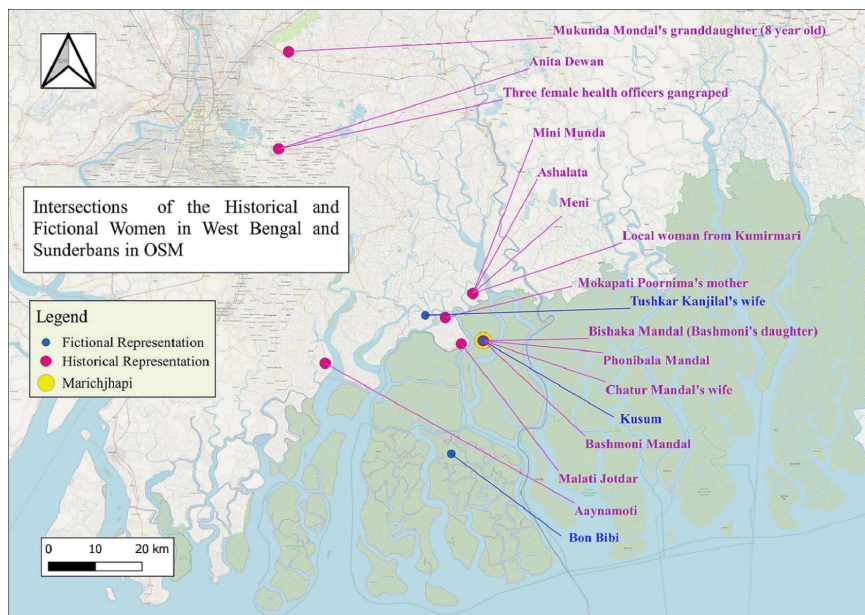
Figure 20: Adding Open Street Map as the Base Layer in QGIS Lets the Readers Visualize and Interpret the Contents in Their Real-time Places
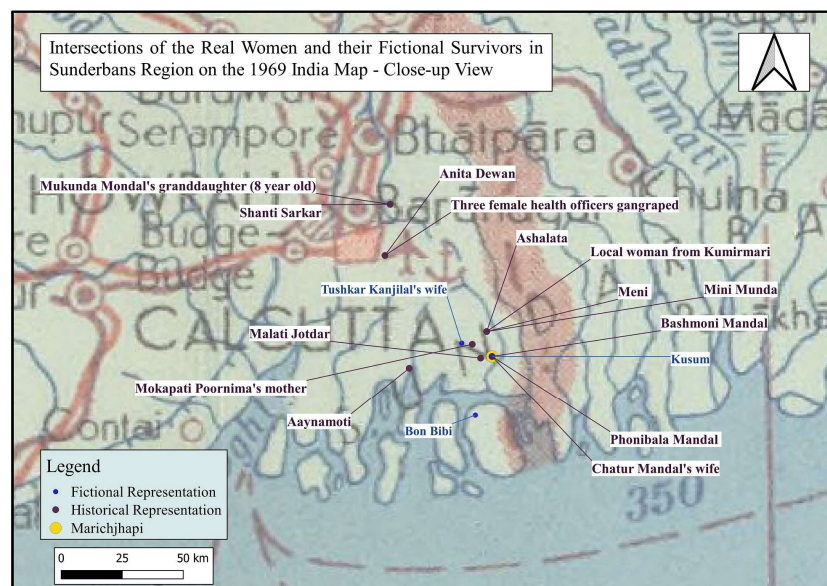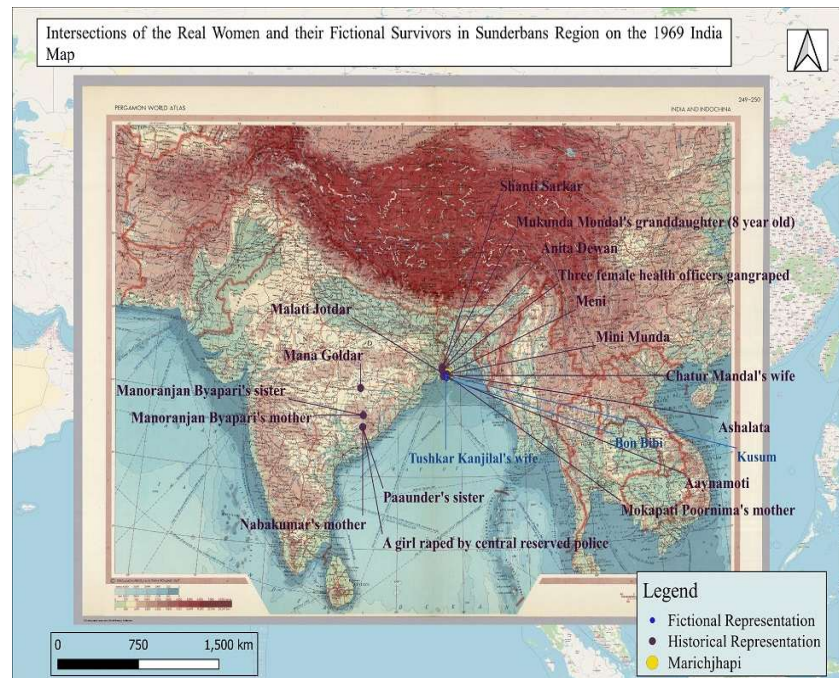
Figure 21: (a) Intersections of the Real Women and their Fictional Survivors in Sunderbans Region on the 1969 India Map (Pergamon 1968); (b) Shows the 1969 Map of India with the Data on Women Georeferenced to a Current Open Street Base Layer

Contrasting Identities of Female Survivors

Female survivors of the Marichjhapi massacre had to

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navigate through multiple identities – as a refugee, a Dalit and a woman. Dalit women are often seen as the primary care givers of the family – responsible for collecting water and other resources for the family from distant places. This care giver status of women was challenged during the massacre, especially during the economic blockade which forced women to risk their lives in acquiring these resources. An example is the incident of drowning of three boats of women by police during the blockade that was mentioned before. Besides this, Sen (2015) mentions the involvement of 250 female officers in the massacre (147). This positions females as both victims and perpetrators of the violence. However, it is impossible to arrive at a definitive conclusion here as Sen (2015) and Mallick (2024) are the only sources that mentions the presence of female officers.

Intersectionality – Caste and Gender

The data collected on upper caste female survivors, both real and fictional, are minimal as most of them were located in a safer space – Calcutta, the capital of West Bengal. The intersectional identity of women, caste in this case, determined their spatial location. Dalit women were at a disadvantage here as it led to their caste-based spatial segregation and eventual massacre. Even in shared spaces, the differences between the lived experiences of upper and lower caste women are evident, as seen in the experiences of Kusum and Nilima. In Sunderbans, the upper caste women were located in a safer space, Lusibari, as compared to the lower caste women who were located in Marichjhapi.

Gender-based Violence

The gender-based violence against women was not directly carried out by upper-caste, rather police force was used by the upper-caste government to assert their caste superiority over Dalit women. Almost all texts and newspaper articles consulted for this study highlights rape and other sexual violence against women by the police force deployed on the island to carry out the massacre. However, the names of the perpetrators are unidentified as the official documents related to the massacre are still unavailable to the public because of the state's denial of the massacre.

ii. Space

Gendered Spaces of Caste
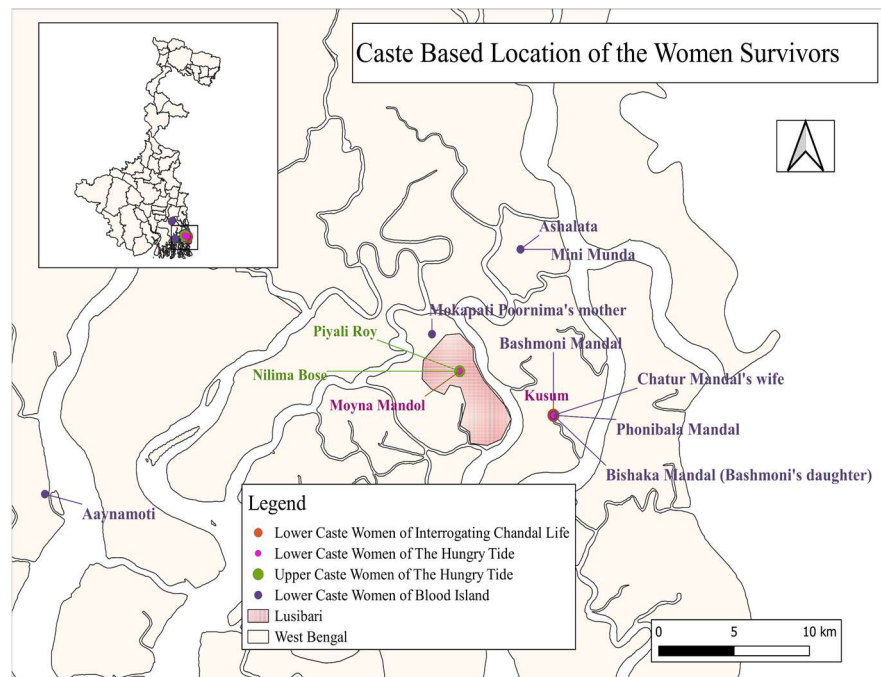
Figure 22: Caste-based Mapping of the Women of the Marichjhapi Massacre

Lusibari, the fictional setting used in *The Hungry Tide*, is located near the actual site of the massacre – Marichjhapi. Lusibari is predominantly an upper caste space as opposed to Marichjhapi which is a Dalit feminine space. The caste based spatial segregation results in

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the creation of gendered spaces of caste hierarchies (extending on Ambedkar's concept of spatial hierarchy). The clustering of the survivors occurs mainly around the site of the massacre (even post-massacre as evident from the location of the women obtained from newspapers in Figure 19a). Kumirmari (Shanti Sarkar), Kadambagachhi (Meni), Bantala (Anita Dewan) are the other clusters where the real and the fictional women intersect according to Figure 19a. This shows a possible hazard in these spaces where the Dalit women occur in larger numbers and hence their vulnerability to caste and gender-based violence. The women of the massacres are therefore exploited based on their socio-political, cultural identity and caste-based physical location as evident from the results and analyses of the narratives presented above. This relation between the spatial location of the survivors and the intensity of exploitation suggests that space should be considered as a category in the intersectional identity of the Dalit women. As, the caste-based geographical location and vulnerability of Dalit female exploitation are directly proportional.

Binary Spaces

The caste-based location and resettlement of the refugees from East Bengal is explicit in the narratives examined for this study. A striking contrast is observed between Kolkata (or Calcutta) and Marichjhapi where the former is seen as the home for upper caste refugees who were welcomed by their relatives and other connections while the latter were occupied by the lower caste refugees who did not have any acquaintance in the capital city (Chakrabarti 1990, Cited in Chowdhury 2011). Ambedkar's notion of spatial hierarchy that places the upper caste at a better geographical location is visible here. However, the conditions of the female refugees, belonging to both upper and the lower caste, in these spaces are largely left unexplored even in the papers that attempted a study of the spatiality of the

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massacre. This negligence of the female refugee experiences in general is addressed by Bose as pointed out in page 10 of this study (Bose 2010, p. 7). Even post massacre, Dalit refugee women are still in the outskirts – denied access to the capital city – and are still segregated based on their caste identity (see Figure 22).

Refugee Camps as Dalit Spaces
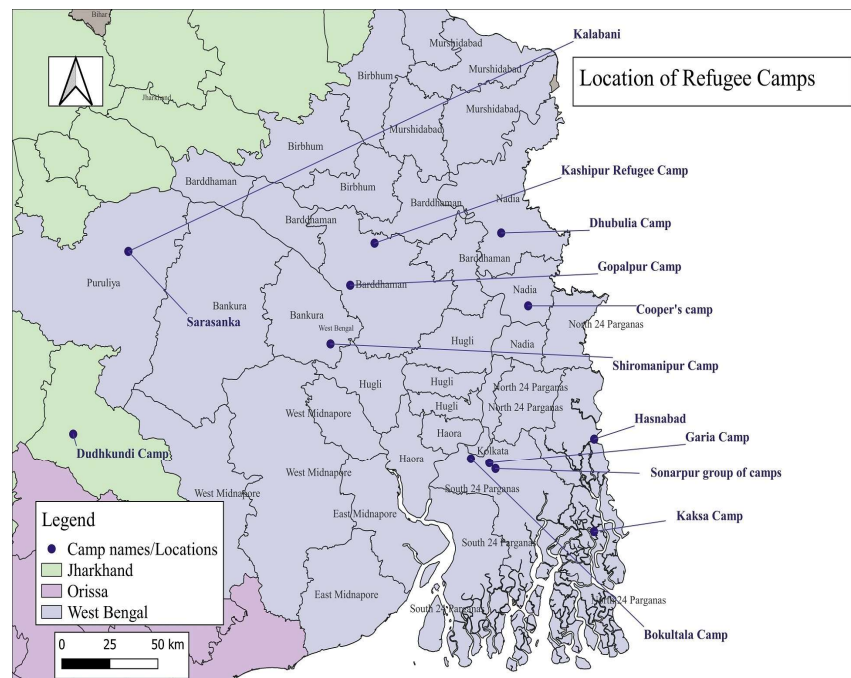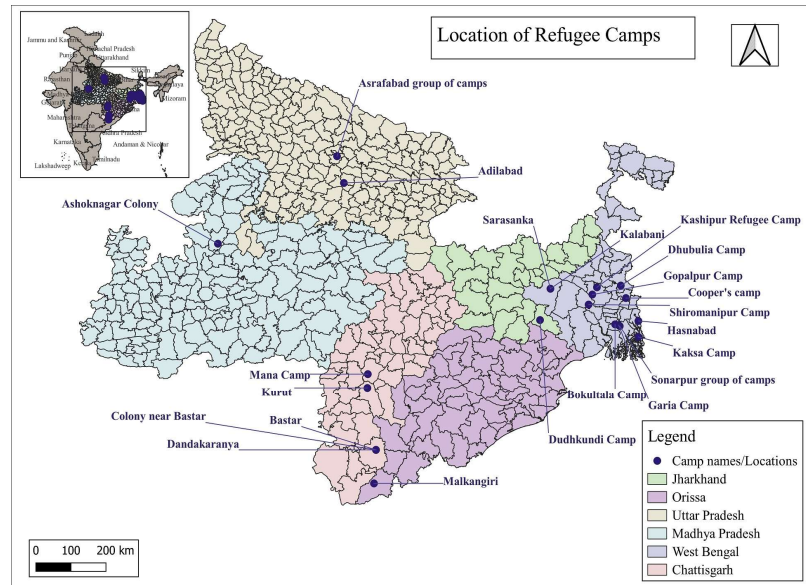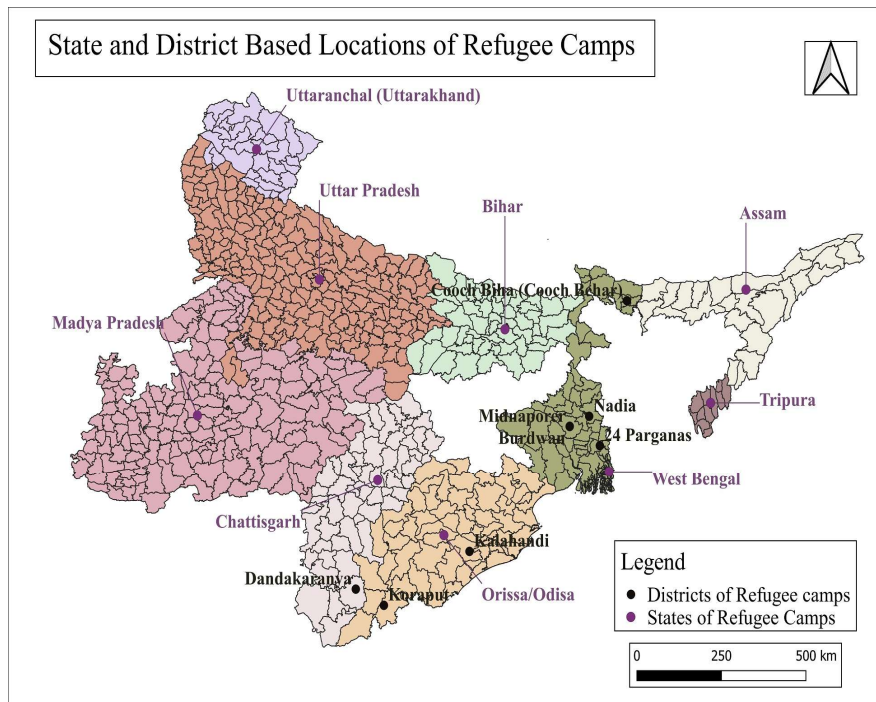
Figure 23: (a) Main States of the Refugee Camps; (b) Location of the Refugee Camps in Sunderbans, West Bengal and (c) State and District-based Location of the Refugee Camps

Figure 23 (a, c) shows that the refugee camps were predominantly located in the states of Chattisgarh, Uttar Pradesh, Uttaranchal, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, Orissa and Jharkhand. Figure 23 (b) shows the camps that are located close to Marichjhapi. These spaces were specifically chosen for camps mainly because of their proximity to the original place of the refugees (East Bengal). The materials considered for this study identifies the origin states of the Namasudra caste (of refugees) as Bihar and Bangladesh, evident in figure 24. Thus, the proximity of their original land to Marichjhapi and the Sundarbans prompted the refugees to relocate and settle there as it meant that they would experience similar socio-cultural habits, geography and climate.
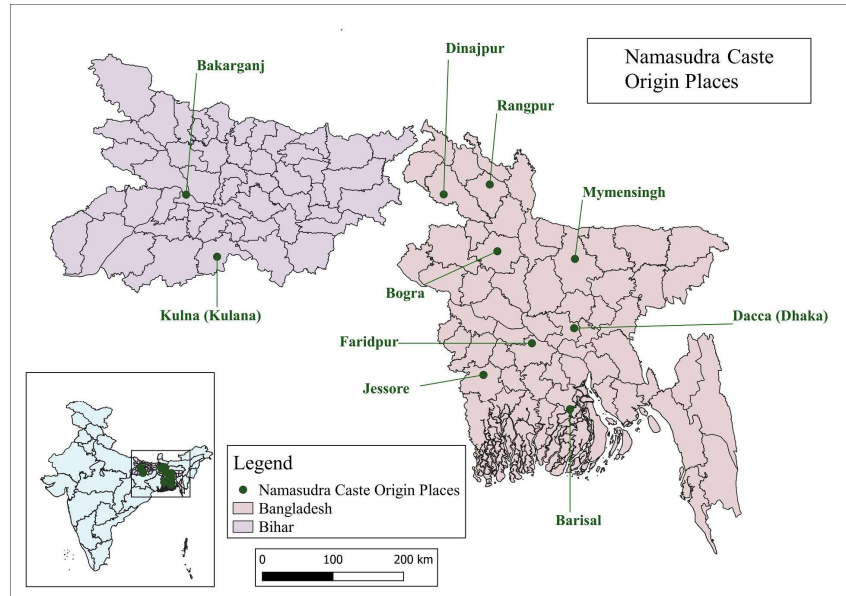
Figure 24: Origin Places of the Namasudra Caste

Figure 23 (a) shows that the greatest number of camps are located in West Bengal, which aligns to the narrative that the Dalit refugees were forced to move to Chhattisgarh (then Madya Pradesh) as they were the last wave of refugee to arrive in Bengal. The states chosen for the camps (Figure 23c) belong to the northern and central parts of India i.e., places that are more spatially and linguistically closer to the original habitat of the refugees. This also implies that the Dalits occur in large concentration in the spaces (hotspots), shown in figures 23 (a,c), and 22, thereby demanding more security from further caste-based violence.

Figure 25: Refugee Movements to Prominent Camps

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The flow map of the refugee movement (figure 14) shows that the main spaces occupied by the refugees during their migration from East Bangladesh to India are Hasnabad, Marichjhapi and Dandakaranya (based on the frequency of the places mentioned in the sources considered for this study). The places also served as a location for prominent refugee camps.

3.4.3   Additional Literature

Analysis of additional literatures such as court orders, letters and petitions related to the massacre as well as feminist geocritical and digital cartographical analysis of the authors who have written about the massacre is attempted in this section following the geocritical practice of multifocality.

i. Authors

The authors of the primary fictional, non-fictional and research materials studied here are predominantly males. Fourteen authors were considered for the location-based database creation (figure 26), of which six were women. The gender, caste and spatial location of the writers play an important role in ensuring the visibility of Dalit refugee female experiences of the Marichjhapi massacre. The primary texts considered for this study were all written by males except for Jhuma Sen's work. Female authors mostly produced research articles or book chapters (including Sen) which accounts for the lack of female narratives on the massacre. With most female writers hailing from upper-caste origins, there is a pressing need for Dalit women to address the massacre as a significant theme in their works.
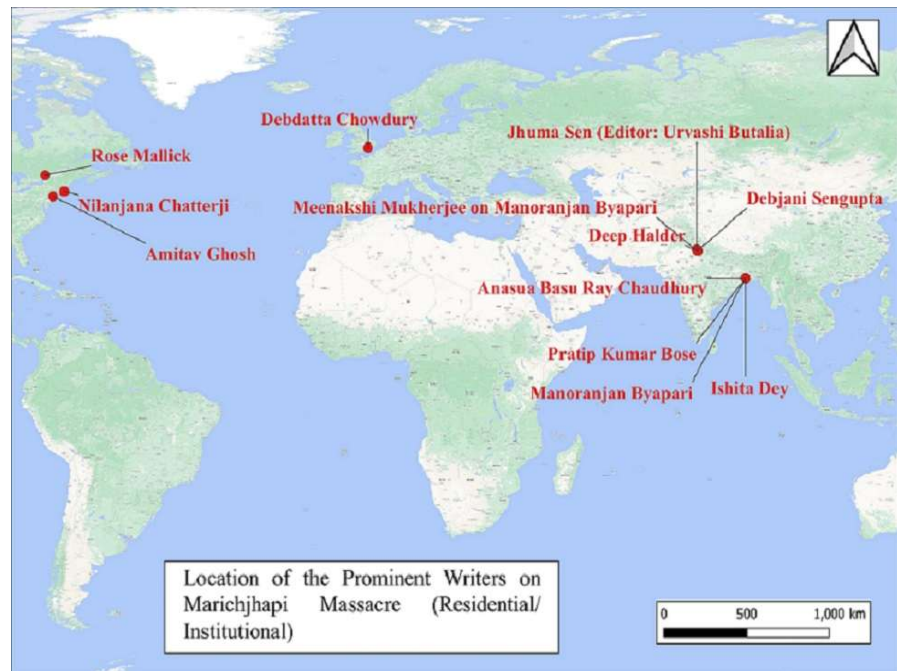
Figure 26: Locations of Prominent Authors of the Marichjhapi Massacre

The writers are located across the world (professional locations are used to map) though the majority are located in India, especially in Bengal (figure 26), thereby making it easier for the writers to research and write about the event. Even the authors who are located outside India had a personal connection to the massacre. Male authors, both upper caste and lower caste, who were directly or indirectly affected by the massacre or partition generally wrote about it. They either belong to a Dalit refugee family or had Bengali roots as in the case of Amitav Ghosh, Deep Halder, Ross Mallick, Manoranjan Byapari (Namasudra refugee) and Soumya Sankar Bose. Such lived experiences of the authors enabled them to authenticall portray or recreate the events of the massacre. "As recorded in a fragment of conversation at the beginning of the book, Bose himself comes from an ancestral generation of partition refugees who migrated to India from Jessore, Bangladesh" (Mallik 2022, p. 63). These connections enabled the authors to vividly portray the landscape and settings—specifically

the Sunderbans—in their narratives. Consequently, there is vast potential for a Dalit refugee female author to articulate the unique female perspectives on the massacre.

ii. Court Orders, Letters, Petitions

The data on the court orders, letters, and petitions before, during and after the massacre are unavailable in the public domain due to the state's denial of the massacre thereby making it difficult to understand the legal interventions in the massacre. Assessing the impact of the verdicts on the female survivors becomes even more difficult. The investigations conducted for this study did not reveal any verdict or court case on rape, physical assault, or any violence against Dalit women of the massacre though most texts and newspaper reports mention rape by the police force. The massacre is still not thoroughly investigated with the state government denying it and the court proceedings stopped with the dismissal of the very few cases that were filed.

The court petitions that are available are not directly related to the female survivors and are not suitable for understanding female experiences. Some of the court verdicts that are available are related to the petitions filed by the refugees claiming their right to live in Marichjhapi. One instance is when the refugees approached the Calcutta high-court for their basic right to live, "the judiciary (Justice BC Basak of Calcutta High Court who dismissed the case) fell for the state government's factually wrong and unwritten contention that the island was part of a reserved forest" (Vardhan 2019). In terms of the court proceedings related to the economic blockade, Calcutta High Court lawyer Shakya Sen represented the refugees in their fight against the economic blockade imposed by the government (Halder 2019b). An application was filed under Article 226 of the Constitution of India at Calcutta High Court by the refugees, against the economic blockade

at Marichjhapi by the state government. Their petition sought for 'the peaceful existence, life and living, occupation, trade and business of the inhabitants and citizens, residing at Marichjhapi' and 'to lift the illegal and arbitrary blockade and warlike acts of oppression and allow them free egress and ingress from their place of residence and business without hindrance of any kind whatsoever' (Sen 2015, p. 146). Justice R.N. Pyne, in response, passed a ruling to let the safe passage of essential goods to Marichjhapi during the government imposed economic blockade (Sen 2015, p. 146) but the same was never implemented in the island.

Bose (2020) has included the image of a letter from a rape survivor of the massacre in his photobook. This is the only first-hand account of rape during the massacre. The anonymised letter dates back to 1979 and is addressed to the Chairman of UUS (Udbastu Unnayanshil Samiti/Refugee Welfare Committee). It details police brutalities during the massacre including rape and sexual assault of the survivor and her final escape from 6 days of continuous police torture in Bagna Police camp. The letter explicitly identifies the sites of the violence and expresses the emotional turmoil faced by the survivor and her family as they relive those haunting memories in the same locations they call home. The language used is emotional, highlighting the impact of the everlasting trauma of violating the body and soul of the survivor and ends with a demand for justice.

> Those policemen dragged me forcefully to their launch. As my mother tried to stop them, they kicked her and threw her in water. When they finally brought me to their launch – they took me to Bagna Police camp. . . They assaulted me in every possible way. They tore apart my clothes and exploited my womanhood. The policemen inhumanly tortured me and raped me for the 6 days. The pain became too excruciating. I finally escaped their

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grip when I got a chance, I came back to Marichjhapi on 3/2/1979 to my family. This harrowing situation has not only affected me but also my family in all possible ways. The physical pain and bruises that have covered me will fade away with time but the fact is it is more than that. I've been scarred not only socially but emotionally. This experience will haunt me forever. What those policemen did to me has left me anguished and devastated for the rest of my life. I request you, as a victim of the vicious act, to bring justice for the pain by punishing the accused (Bose 2020).

There are also multiple letters related to the massacre cited in Mallick (1999). A significant letter is the one titled "Genocide Committed on the Scheduled Caste Refugees of Marichjhapi Island" from All India Scheduled Castes Tribes and Backward Classes Employees Coordination Council to Bhola Paswan Shastri M.P., Chairman of the Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Though the letter elaborately described the massacre of the Dalits in Marichjhapi, it did not elicit the appropriate court response or legal proceedings.

3.5 Conclusions – Space, Caste and Gender in the Marichjhapi Massacre

The chapter attempted to establish the relations among space, caste and gender in Dalit massacre using the case study of the Marichjhapi massacre. The study started with the descriptions of the events before, during, and after the massacre. Partition of Bengal and the consequent waves of refugee movements and Dalit refugee settlements in Marichjhapi formed the events before the massacre. The caste-based spatial discrimination of the Dalit refugees and spatial denial also adds to the events before the massacre. The events during the massacre consisted of police brutality, arson, murder, and rape

initiated by the upper-caste government in Bengal. The denial of the massacre by the state and the inaction of the judiciary constitutes the events after the massacre.

The next step consisted of identifying the female survivors – fictional and historical representations. In terms of the female survivors, their anonymity and homogenisation of their experiences in most non-fictional narratives highlight the importance of this study that aims to render the Dalit female survivors visible in the spaces that they occupy. Though there are striking similarities between the characterisations of real and fictional Dalit women (Kusum and Mana), their experiences are left unexplored in the narratives under study. The female experiences of the Marichjhapi massacre are marked by a 'politics of difference' (Guru 1995) and they bear the 'triple burden' of caste, class, and gender (Chakravarti 2018). Violence against women is mentioned in almost all narratives on the massacre but no legal actions were taken against such crimes. When enquired about the use of fictional survivors in text and visual narratives on the massacre Soumya Sankar Bose replies, "'We don't need to violate someone's privacy to tell their story, do we?' he asks. 'Why would I want the victim to be victimized all over again?' So, rather than putting the face of the actual subject in his work, he often gets others to enact a certain scenario. . . 'It may have been staged but does that diminish the relevance of its message?' he asks." (Ghosal 2020).

The study also showed that the conditions of the female survivors have not improved post the massacre, with most of them living near the site of the massacre, awaiting compensation and rehabilitation. Mallick (2024, p. 96) states, "[e]ven assistance to the 1040 surviving Marichjhapi families then recorded as residing in West Bengal was not given" to which Jalais (2005a) adds, "those killed in the Morichjhanpi massacre are yet to find justice, and their stories yet

to appear in histories". The additional literatures examined also pointed to the pending justice for the victims of the massacre. Mallick (1999) suggests, "[o]ne small step in [the] process [of getting justice for the victims] might include investigating the Marichjhapi massacre and sending those responsible for trial to the Supreme Court or International Criminal Court" (123).

The caste, gender, and spatial location of the authors also determined the depiction of Dalit female experiences of the massacre. The study implies that the dearth in female narratives can be filled by Dalit female authors by producing more literature and research on the subject. Therefore, the need for a *Dalit feminitude* (drawing from Punia's 2023, concept of Dalitude) that was evident in the study of the Kilvenmani massacre is also apparent here. Land and gender (i.e., female) connections are also evident in real and fictional narratives as mostly female survivors connect the space of Marichjhapi to the trauma of the massacre (e.g., Kusum and Mana). The fictional narratives on Marichjhapi (in English) are less in number. In terms of setting, both real and fictional places are used in the narratives. The narratives also emphasise caste-based spatial segregation of the refugees and the existence of gendered spaces of caste – upper caste and Dalit female spaces. The fact that the state is denying the occurrence of the massacre gives a fictional facet to the event itself. This points to the alarming need for narratives (both fictional and non-fictional) on Dalit massacres, that document and explore the spatial relation of caste and gender in such massacres.

The importance of fictional narratives is highlighted by the popularity gained by Ghosh's work. The English fictional narrative on the massacre was able to garner more attention from the academicians as well as the public. In the research front, there are more articles on

The Hungry Tide, the fictional text on the massacre, as compared to the non-fictional texts. Sengupta (2016) notes,

> [t]he largest number of academic articles are literary criticisms stemming from Amitav Ghosh's novel, which as a work of fiction doesn't add to the historical record, though providing more publicity than all the other academic works on the massacre. It provided credibility that Untouchables could never have obtained on their own.

In conclusion, the analysis confirms the relation among space, caste and gender in Dalit massacres. The caste identity (of being a Dalit) determines the spatial location of the female survivors which in turn render them more susceptible to gender and caste-based violence during the massacres. This chapter used the Marichjhapi massacre as a second case study to establish the above relations. The feminist geocritical and digital cartographical reading of Marichjhapi massacre based on the selected fictional and non-fictional texts reveal that both the female survivors and Marichjhapi (the space) still bear the trauma of the massacre. Clustering of Dalit women in specific places, in this case Marichjhapi, makes them more vulnerable to caste-based gender violence. Following our suggestions in the previous chapter, we reiterate here that elimination of this caste-based spatial segregation in India would prevent the large-scale caste-based, and gender-based violence against the Dalits. Mixing of populations, equitable access to spaces, and inter-caste or exogamous marriages are some methods to eliminate the caste practices and spatial segregations in India. In an effort to further ground our argument about the space, caste and gender relations in Dalit massacres, the next chapter attempts a comparative study of the Kilvenmani massacre and the Marichjhapi massacre using comparative literary, historical and cultural methods.

Chapter 4

Space, Gender, and Caste: A Comparative Approach to the Kilvenmani and Marichjhapi Massacres Using Feminist Geocriticism and Digital Cartography

All those things they do to a Dalit woman, they do symbolically also to her Dalit family, to the Dalit people. It is done publicly, as a reminder: Step out of line, this is what happens to you. A human body becomes a billboard to remind the oppressed what the stakes are if you resist domination.

- *Thenmozhi Soundararajan, The Trauma of Caste*

This chapter offers a comparative analysis of the space, caste and gender relations observed in the Kilvenmani massacre and the Marichjhapi massacre. The chapter is an extension of Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 as we are grounding our previous findings using feminist geocriticism and digital cartography on the two massacres further using comparative methods. The main aim of the chapter is to understand the similarities and differences in the events and the female experiences before, during, and after the massacre. By developing and applying a comparative framework for analysing Dalit massacres grounded in literary, historical, and cultural comparative theoretical frameworks the study looks at the sequence of historical and cultural events, along with the narrative techniques used to represent Dalit massacres. The chapter focuses on thematic comparisons to understand the underlying intersections of space, caste, and gender in Dalit massacres, and to identify the patterns of violence in Dalit massacres which further helps in devising policies to prevent future violence.

4.1 Comparative Analysis of Dalit Massacres: Literary, Historical and Cultural Perspectives

"The fact and its comparative study are inseparable" as it facilitates a deeper understanding of the order of the historical events (Cited in Griffiths 2017, p. 491). Comparative analysis is used as a research methodology in the fields of literature, history, and cultural studies among others, to gain a deeper understanding of the causes and consequences of historical events. The comparative method, which analyses two or more systems of relation for common patterns and distinctions (usually identifying these patterns as products of either a shared genealogy or shared responses to specific historical conditions), emerged in the transition from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century as the preeminent method for finding commonalities across an extraordinary range of aesthetic, social, and scientific fields of research, from philology to anatomy, from geology to sociology (Griffiths 2017, p. 474).

A comparative study of Dalit massacres reveals the common patterns and distinctions or similarities and differences which will further deepen our understanding of the female experiences of the massacres. Comparative approach is suited for analysing the two case studies – the Kilvenmani massacre and the Marichjhapi massacre – as "[i]t is argued that the case study method is closely related to the comparative method" (Lijphart 1971, p. 682). The massacres selected are incidents that can happen anywhere in India due to the all-pervasive nature of caste in the country. This chapter makes use of the case studies to initiate discussions on the other lesser-known massacres and to understand the spatial vulnerabilities of Dalits in the country. Comparative analysis of the selected massacres also facilitates empirical validation of theoretical concepts in Dalit massacre studies like the space-caste-gender relations, using case studies and in-depth analysis. The under-researched nature of Dalit massacres, as discussed in previous chapters, has resulted in the absence of comparative analysis of massacres, to the best of our knowledge. Consequently,

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there are no established theoretical or methodological framework that effectively addresses the question, 'How can two Dalit massacres be compared to understand space-caste-gender relations?'.

The present chapter addresses this gap by integrating theoretical concepts from comparative literary, historical, and cultural studies, alongside the primary frameworks of feminist geocriticism and digital cartography to compare the Kilvenmani and the Marichjhapi massacres of India. This combination is determined based on the nature of the materials selected for analysis and the multifocal interdisciplinary nature of feminist geocritical theory. Feminist geocriticism and digital cartography, as elaborated in the previous chapters, are founded in feminist theory, literary studies, geography, and critical cartography which helps in understanding the intersectional identity of Dalit women and their differential experiences of caste in specific spaces. Literary comparative theories help to understand the narrative techniques and styles that are used to present historical events in textual and visual narratives (both fictional and non-fictional narratives). Comparisons of historical events, Dalit massacres in this case, using cultural and historical comparative methods helps in identifying the patterns, mechanisms and dynamics behind complex processes and events in society (Do Vale 2015, p. 61). The chapter contributes to the aim of the thesis, that is to address the gaps in empirical understanding of historical events by making use of cartographic interpretations.

Comparative theory and methods in literature mainly stems from the field of comparative literature. It primarily consists of techniques and methods to compare literatures across the world (cross-cultural, semantic, and mythical comparisons among others). It began as a method to understand the process of writing and literariness across the world, that is, studying human literary behaviour (Nemesio 1999,

p. 2). Comparative literary analysis later expanded to include comparison of literary texts based on themes, theories, motifs, symbols, and issues/events among other factors that are dealt in the texts. Here we will be referring to a few methods and terms from literary comparative theories that will help to understand the narrative techniques and styles that are used to present Dalit massacres in textual and visual narratives. The primary methodology of this thesis, feminist geocriticism, is a literary theory that facilitates comparative analysis as it analyses female experiences in a specific place based on its representations in multiple sources, meaning that it promotes a multifocal analysis. The theory and practice of feminist geocriticism is founded on feminism (here mainly Dalit feminism), literature, and critical feminist geography thereby making it suitable to compare and contrast the gendered experiences of space and caste in the selected fictional and non-fictional narratives of the Dalit massacres. In the previous chapters (chapters 2 and 3) we have individually compared the caste based gendered experiences of women and the creation of gendered spaces of caste within the narratives of each massacre in detail. In this chapter we will compare and contrast the fictional and non-fictional female survivor experiences of both the massacres based on the Dalit feminist thoughts of intersectional identity and feminist differences.

Cross-fictionality (Hatavara and Mildorf 2017) is a concept in comparative studies of fictionality that is of primary importance to this study. Cross-fictionality refers to "a narrative where the frame of reference is non-fictional [Dalit massacres in this case], but the narrative modes include those that are conventionally regarded as fictional" (Hatavara and Mildorf 2017, p. 393). This concept is utilised in the later sections to compare the narrative techniques used in the visual and textual narratives on the Kilvenmani and the Marichjhapi massacres where the event itself is real/non-fictional but are

represented through both fictional and non-fictional narratives. Intertextuality (Kristeva 1966) another concept from comparative literature which highlights the inter-connectedness of the texts, is a feature displayed by most narratives of the selected massacres.

Comparative Historical Analysis (CHA), a method rooted in historical research, is also a suitable theoretical approach for this study. CHA "is defined by a concern with causal analysis, an emphasis on processes over time, and the use of systematic and contextualized comparison" (Mahoney and Rueschemeyer 2003, p. 6). These three characteristics at the core of CHA, make it an effective tool for gaining a deep understanding of the Dalit massacres. A comparative historical analysis of the massacres will begin by locating the causal analysis of the events that led to the massacres. The next step is to locate and understand the processes or events over time – before, during and after – associated with the massacre. The final step is the use of systematic and contextualized comparison of the massacres using feminist geocriticism and digital cartography which has already been attempted in detail in the previous chapters and are further expanded here. A comprehensive CHA analysis will therefore reveal the similarities and differences that result in space, caste, and gender relations in the massacre.

CHA is often founded on in-depth case studies where the cases are analysed separately and in comparison, to understand the patterns of similarities and differences. This again makes it a suitable method to understand the Dalit massacres from a historical and cultural aspect. The patterns of violence like the weapons used, and people targeted are quantitatively substantiated and theorised with the help of case study based comparative historical analysis. "Without case studies, scholars 'would continue to advance theoretical arguments that are inappropriate, outdated, or totally irrelevant for a specific region'

(Bradshaw and Wallace, 1995, p. 155). Case studies can elaborate historical processes and specify concrete historical details" (Kreuger and Neuman 2006, p. 418). Comparative historical researchers using CHA choose case studies that show similarities, enabling them to draw meaningful comparisons of patterns (Mahoney and Rueschemeyer 2003, p. 8). The number of cases chosen are limited as,

> [b]y employing a small number of cases, comparative historical researchers can comfortably move back and forth between theory and history in many iterations of analysis as they formulate new concepts, discover novel explanations, and refine preexisting theoretical expectations in light of detailed case evidence" (13).

Lesser number of cases also facilitate an in-depth analysis or close-reading of the individual case studies "thereby achieving a higher level of conceptual and measurement validity than is often possible when a large number of cases are selected" (Mahoney and Rueschemeyer 2003, p. 13). CHA is therefore suitable for close-reading the two massacres and its narratives that are derived from multimodal sources.

CHA "is a field of research characterized by the use of systematic comparison and the analysis of processes over time to explain large-scale outcomes such as revolutions, political regimes, and welfare states" (Mahoney and Rueschemeyer 2004, p. 81). Hence historically comparing Dalit massacres helps in understanding the role of space, caste, and gender in Dalit massacres and to identify the similarities and differences in survivor experiences before, during, and after the massacre. A comparative analysis based on historical and cultural perspectives will aid in understanding the patterns of casteist violence in Dalit massacres and in developing strategies and policies to prevent such incidents.

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Comparative cultural studies are a new framework first proposed and outlined by Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek (1999) as "the merger of aspects of comparative literature and cultural studies" (3). He defines it as a,

> field of study where selected tenets of the discipline of comparative literature are merged with selected tenets of the field of cultural studies meaning that the study of culture and culture products—including, but not restricted to literature, communication, media, art, etc.—is performed in a contextual and relational construction and with a plurality of methods and approaches, inter-disciplinarity, and, if and when required, including team work (16).

He proposed a ten-point framework to carry out comparative cultural analysis especially in the context of literature with a major focus on three-main areas.

> 1) To study literature (text and/or literary system) with and in the context of culture and the discipline of cultural studies; 2) In cultural studies itself to study literature with borrowed elements (theories and methods) from comparative literature; and 3) To study culture and its composite parts and aspects in the mode of the proposed "comparative cultural studies" approach instead of the currently reigning single-language approach dealing with a topic with regard to its nature and problematics in one culture only (Tötösy de Zepetnek 1999, p. 3).

The framework, drawing from comparative literature, is mostly focused on comparing the cross-cultural representations or cultures across nations and boundaries. In this study, however, we are applying the framework to the comparative analysis of historical

events (massacres here) that took place within a country to understand how cultural identities like caste can shape the gendered experiences of Dalit massacres and its representations in literature. As it is also important to "concentrate on the problems of spatializing social and symbolic organizations and institutions [like caste in this case] and the problems of inter-societal and intercultural interactions and relations" (Siegrist 2006). The study consequently does not adhere to all the ten points of the framework outlined by Tötösy de Zepetnek (1999), but adopts those that are most suitable for its objectives. One example of the theory that is applicable to this study is how Tötösy de Zepetnek (1999) outlines the framework as a "built-in" tool for comparing literature written in English and the stress on interdisciplinary research for comparative cultural analysis (14).

Based on the previous discussions, this chapter presents an analysis focused primarily on the theoretical and methodological approaches founded in comparative literary theories and concepts, like feminist geocriticism (Dalit/feminism and geocriticism), cross-fictionality, and intertexuality, along with comparative historical analysis and comparative cultural studies. The literary approaches are utilised to understand the fictional and non-fictional narratives whereas the historical methods facilitate an understanding of the sequence of events before, during, and after the massacre. Comparative cultural approach helps to comprehend the role of cultural institutions and practices like caste discrimination and socio-spatial stratification in Dalit massacres. The first section gives a comparative historical and cultural analysis of the events. The next section is a thematic literary comparative analysis that compares the narratives of the Kilvenmani and Marichjhapi massacres followed by the comparisons of the literary theories and techniques used in the narratives.

4.2 From Beginning to End: Comparing the Sequential Events of the Two Dalit Massacres Using Comparative Historical and Cultural Analysis

The comparative analysis of the selected Dalit massacres using Comparative Historical Analysis (CHA) and comparative cultural analysis help to further understand and compare the causal factors that led to the massacre. The space-caste-gender relations, along with the similarities and differences also became clear with the comparative analysis. CHA begins by locating the historical events and identifying and comparing its causal factors. It then proceeds to understand the processes over time which in this case can be broadly divided as before (trigger events), during (tactics and targets), and after the massacre (law, justice, and rehabilitation) by using 'systematic and contextualized comparison' (Mahoney and Rueschemeyer 2003).

Before the Massacre

Before proceeding to look at the trigger events it is essential to understand the locations of the massacres. The Kilvenmani massacre took place in a village in Tamil Nadu whereas the Marichjhapi massacre occurred in the Sunderbans island of West Bengal as shown in Figure 27 below. Both the places are located near the sea though the former is located in a southern coastal state whereas the latter is located in the west coast of India. The coastal location of Dalits in both the cases facilitated the massacres as Berg (2020) states that Dalits located in coastal areas are more prone to violence as compared to Dalits located in other places based on his study of the Karamchedu massacre. The presence of radical reform movements in coastal regions leading to assertion of Dalit identity and the economic independence of the coastal communities are some of the causal factors that incite the upper caste to perpetrate violence against them (Berg 2020, p. 103, 109).
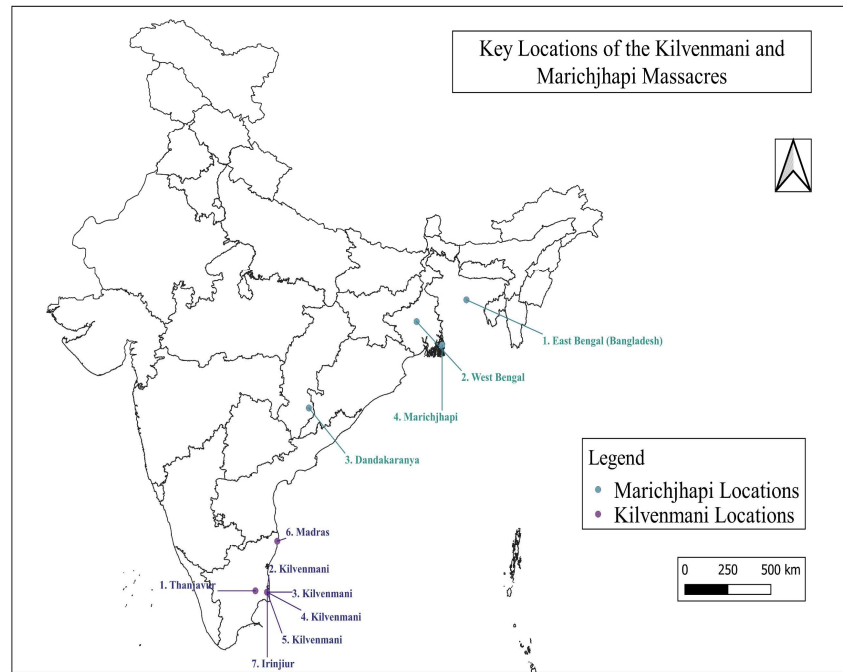
Figure 27: Comparison of the Key Locations of the Kilvenmani and
Marichjhapi Massacres

In addition to the spatial location there are economic, political, and cultural causal factors to the massacres which are dealt thoroughly in the previous chapters on the specific massacres. A comparative analysis of the key points is presented here. A close examination exposes that the economic (class) and cultural (caste) factors are closely related in both the massacres. The caste and the class of the victims rendered them vulnerable to attacks from the upper caste who also belonged to the higher economic class. The Kilvenmani massacre was a result of class conflict coupled with caste as the Dalit labourers of the *Paraiya* caste demanded an increase in wages whereas the Marichjhapi massacre occurred due to the poor financial condition of the Dalit *Namasudra* refugees, who were unable to afford land on the mainland after the partition of India. This reveals the interconnections between caste and class in India as the lower caste are mostly positioned in lower economic classes as a result of centuries of

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marginalisation, while the upper caste tends to belong to higher social strata. A historical contextualised reading of the massacres therefore shows that the long-standing practise of Dalit exclusion and unequal caste-based distribution of resources and opportunities are a major reason for this caste-class relationship that is still prevalent in India. When this dynamic is altered at the slightest level, it leads to caste-based violence including massacres.

A shared political theme in both massacres is the Dalit assertion of rights in response to various forms of discrimination and also the involvement of the Communist Party of India [Marxist] (CPIM). In Kilvenmani, the Dalits organised under their 'labourer' identity to protest against their economic and physical exploitation whereas in Marichjhapi they organised as 'Dalit refugees' and 'self-rehabilitated' themselves when the government overlooked their entitlement to proper rehabilitation. CPI(M) organised the Dalit labourers of Kilvenmani and empowered them to stand up for the right to a decent pay. The party also stood by the victims after the massacre, with many left feminist activists along with the party rehabilitating the victims after the massacre. However, in Marichjhapi, though CPI(M) encouraged the Dalit refugees to move from Dandakaranya to Marichjhapi (it was the party that suggested the place), later it reversed its policy and acted as the perpetrator in the massacre. This shows the opposing standpoints undertaken by the same political party in two distinct massacres in different regions of the country as a result of the caste equations prevailing in the regions. Caste practises and socio-spatial stratification are some other common features that are observed in both the massacres.

During the Massacre

In both events, perpetrators burnt huts where Dalits sought refuge to escape the violence during the massacre, killing both women

and children. The gendered nature of Dalit massacres is evident in the intentional killing of women and children during both the massacres. Such acts are often intended to destroy the targeted communities physically or by disrupting its social and biological reproduction by eliminating surviving populations (Hartley 2007, p. 237). Women (18) and children (22) were primarily targeted in the Kilvenmani massacre in an attempt to erase the Dalit community. Arson, rape, and murder are the methods used to eradicate the Dalits in both the massacres though Marichjhapi victims also endured police brutality and firing. Dalit women endure more trauma and violence during the massacres as they are both physically and sexually abused by the upper-caste or their allies. During the Kilvenmani massacre there was also significant institutional and state inaction as evident in the narratives on the event (cite) that clearly shows the state acting as silent perpetrators of the massacre. The same is true for the Marichjhapi massacre as it was carried out by the state. The police were notified during both massacres. Muniyan, a Kilvenmani survivor, claims to have lodged a complaint around 11.15pm of the same night with the Keezhvelur (Venmani) police station but to no effect (Manikandan 2017). On a similar note, Saphalananda Haldar informed the nearest police during the Marichjhapi massacre (Mallick 2024), but in each case, there was either inaction or delayed response.

After the Massacre

The public inaction continued after the massacres with the political parties, academicians, and legal/judicial systems (absence of case filings and implementation of Prevention of Atrocities Act) maintaining silence over the Dalit killings. The judicial-bias, state inaction, institutional caste bias and academic disinterest on the massacres are dealt in detail in the previous chapters on the massacres. The apathy of the state and the police force should be read against the

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caste identity of the victims who are often relegated to the lower strata of the society. The victims were denied legal justice in both the massacres. In terms of rehabilitation, Dalit feminist activists ensured land redistribution and survivor rehabilitation in Kilvenmani but the survivors of Marichjhapi were not rehabilitated by the state. Denial of legal justice and social justice is evident in both the massacres as most of the survivors still continue to live in the same conditions.

CHA and comparative cultural approach also take into consideration the politics of remembrances of the two Dalit massacres. Though there are physical memorials constructed to honour the martyrs of both the massacres (Mallick 2024, p. 56), Kilvenmani and Marichjhapi are less researched and culturally represented and even lesser represented in history textbooks. This is despite Kilvenmani being termed as the first recorded Dalit massacre in India and Marichjhapi being compared to the Jallianwala Bagh. In the contemporary scenario, the Kilvenmani massacre is less researched as compared to Marichjhapi which has seen a rise in interest in the recent years. Rising research interests on the role of caste in Partition of India and Bengal has also resulted in an increasing amount of research on Marichjhapi. On the other hand, Kilvenmani is more represented in popular culture (films and fiction) as opposed to Marichjhapi as the latter is still denied by the state. The female narratives of both the massacres are however yet to be explored in detail as established in the previous chapters.

CHA and comparative cultural analysis reveal that the causal factors of both the massacres can be traced to caste practices in India which relegates the Dalits to lower class without access to basic rights and resources. The cumulative effects of casteist discrimination over time, results in Dalit assertion of rights (wages in Kilvenmani) and space (in Marichjhapi) which further leads to violent retaliation from

the upper castes – landlords and the government. The violent methods that are used to silence the Dalits are also strikingly similar with women and children enduring more trauma and violence during the massacres. The results of the comparative analysis of the two case studies can be extrapolated to the other Dalit massacres in the country because of the widespread influence of caste and its socio-cultural discriminatory practices in India. Dalit massacres are historical events that "are not static occurrences taking place at a single, fixed point; rather, they are processes that unfold over time and in time" (Pierson cited in Mahoney and Rueschemeyer 2003, p. 12). The "contextualised comparisons" (Locke and Thelen 1995 cited in Mahoney and Rueschemeyer 2003, p. 13) of Dalit massacres over a period of time as attempted above, therefore reveals the caste-class relationships and the Dalit struggle for space (land) and identity in independent India.

Comparative cultural analysis of the massacre will also look into the literary and other artistic representations of the selected massacres. As this analysis intersects with the literary comparative approaches of feminist geocriticism and related concepts, it will be addressed in the upcoming sections. The next section is a comparative analysis of the narratives on the massacres.

4.3 Uncovering Literary Thematic Divergence and Convergence: Comparing the Narratives on the Kilvenmani massacre and the Marichjhapi massacre

A detailed analysis of the fictional and non-fictional narratives on the massacres are attempted in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 respectively. This section gives a comparative literary analysis of the narratives on the Kilvenmani and the Marichjhapi massacres. The fictional narratives in English on the Kilvenmani massacre that are considered for this study include the novels: *Kuruthipunal/The River of Blood/Chorapuzha* (1978) by Indira Parthasarathy (fictional), *The*

Gypsy Goddess (2014) by Meena Kandasamy (semi-fictional) and *Heat* (2019) by Poomani (fictional). The visual narratives based on or referring to the massacre includes Tamil films like *Kann Sivanthal Mann Sivakum* (When Eyes Turn Red, the Soil Will Too) (1983) directed by Sreedhar Rajan which is an adaptation of *Kuruthipunal*, *Aravindhan* (1997) written and directed by T. Nagarajan, *Virumaandi* (2004), written and directed by Kamal Haasan and *Asuran* (Demon) (2019) written and directed by Vetrimaaran. The non-fictional narratives include the essay collection entitled: *Haunted by Fire: Essays on Caste, Class, Exploitation and Emancipation* (2016) by Mythily Sivaraman and the documentary, *Ramayyahvin Kudisai* (The Ramayya's Hut, 2005) by Bharathi Krishnakumar and online newspaper reports. Fictional texts considered for the study of the Marichjhapi massacre are *The Hungry Tide* by Amitav Ghosh (2011) which has a direct reference to the massacre and the semi-fictional documentary photography *Where the Birds Never Sing* by Soumya Sankar Bose (2020). Non-fictional texts include the Oral History *Blood Island* by Deep Halder (2019), *Interrogating my Chandal Life – An Autobiography of a Dalit* by Manoranjan Byapari (2018), *Chap 6: Reconstructing Marichjhapi: From Margins and Memories of Migrant Lives* by Jhuma Sen (in *Partition: The Long Shadow* edited by Urvashi Butalia, 2015) along with online newspaper reports.

4.3.1 Thematic Comparison

This section grounds, compares, and analyzes the findings of Chapters 2 and 3, which employed feminist geocriticism and digital cartography, through further literary and cultural thematic analysis. The following themes are considered for comparative literary analysis of the narratives on the massacres.

Fictional Women

The female fictional representations of the Kilvenmani massacre are more in number than that of the Marichjhapi massacre mainly because of the rich source of information on the female survivors (in p. 151-156) provided by Kandasamy in *The Gypsy Goddess*. The upper caste women are seldom presented in the narratives, including Kandasamy's work, which makes it difficult to understand their experiences before, during and after the massacre. Ghosh also explores the psyche and the lived experiences of the Marichjhapi survivors in detail much similar to what Kandasamy does for the female survivors of the Kilvenmani massacre. Kusum, for instance, becomes a representative of the Dalit female survivors as she witnesses the massacre. Nilima Bose on the hand is presented as an upper caste representative with spatial and gender privileges of caste.

Rape and sexual violence against women are portrayed in the narratives of the massacre. The lower caste fictional women like Pappati of *Kuruthipunal* and Letchumi of *The Gypsy Goddess* and upper caste women like Pankajam of *Kuruthipunal*, and Arundati of *Kann Sivanthal Mann Sivakum* (attempted rape) endure sexual and physical abuse from the upper caste men thereby highlighting the gender and caste privileges of the upper caste men. Rape and molestation during the massacre are not mentioned in most fictional narratives, except *The Gypsy Goddess*, which highlights the need for more fictional narratives that focus on the intersectional identity of the Dalit women. Kusum of *The Hungry Tide* witness rape and death before losing her life in the massacre. The fictional narratives on the Kilvenmani and the Marichjhapi massacres highlight intentional killing of women and children, a practice that is at the core of massacre theory (Hartley 2007).

Women are compared to land and nature in the narratives using spatial metaphors in Kilvenmani, where both the Dalit female

body and land are commodified as objects to be exploited by upper caste men. Fictional women of Bose (2020) are presented against the backdrop of nature, highlighting the violence endured by nature and women during the massacre. The female fictional characters are few and are underdeveloped as most narratives on Kilvenmani focus on a male protagonist (*Kann Sivanthal Mann Sivakum*) and his experiences of the massacre. While there are representations of female characters belonging to different castes in *Kurithipunal* and *The Gypsy Goddess*, their experiences and psyche are left unexplored in most narratives with the exception of the latter. The assertion of rights by some Dalit female characters is evident, like Aaththa of *Heat*, Pachaiyammal of *Asuran* and *Aravindhan*'s mother, but the resistance and agency of Dalit women before, during, and after the massacre go largely unexamined. In case of Marichjhapi, there is a need for more female fictional representations. The fictional women of Ghosh, both upper and lower caste, are independent and assertive – Kusum, Moyna Mandol, Piyali Roy, and Nilima Bose are some examples.

Anonymisation of the female fictional characters in *Heat* and stereotypical representation of the female characters (Anu and Gayathri) in *Aravindhan* also hinders the exploration of female experiences of the massacre. A close reading of the limited fictional portrayals of women of Kilvenmani reveals the differences in the lived female experiences of the upper caste and lower caste women before and during the massacre as the former were situated in a safer space, both socially and physically. Space along with caste evidently becomes an intersectional category that determines the gendered experiences of female survivors of the massacre. Angela Kaathamuthu of *Virumandi* on the other hand, shows the possibility of invoking the female experience of the massacre indirectly using a female lead. However, such indirect references also carry the risk of going unnoticed unless they are explored more explicitly within the main narrative. Similarly,

though Kusum introduces the massacre into the narrative, the massacre experiences are narrated from a man's, Nirmal's point of view. Another common trend observed in the narratives are that the fictional characters in both the massacre narratives resemble the real characters – Pappathi and Janaki (same name in narratives) of the Kilvenmani massacre and Kusum who resembles the survivor Mana Goldar of the Marichjhapi massacre. Use of fictional characters enables the writers to blend the real survivor experiences into the narrative thereby creating awareness and challenging stereotypes while respecting the privacy of the survivors (as the resemblances are revealed only if read with a thorough knowledge about the massacres and its survivors).

To sum up, detailed exploration of the Dalit female experiences of the massacres in the social and physical spaces is still missing in the fictional narratives of the massacres considered for this study. The intersectional identity of Dalit women which situates them in specific locations should be considered while also incorporating the physical and mental trauma that they undergo during the massacres. The socio-cultural identities and roles played by women such as care-giver status should be explored in the context of the massacres. Also, upper caste fictional women and intentional killing of children are underrepresented in the narratives that are studied. Copeland (2003) highlights the importance of examining fictional narratives on Holocaust to understand the differential experiences of women – as Jews or prisoners and as women, which she refers to as "double victimisation".

> . . . works of imaginative literature and film offer a way to test whether women's experiences should truly be held as distinct from those of men and, if so, what these differences were and whether they caused a profoundly different effect on women survivors (1).

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Dalit massacre therefore has the potential to evolve as a feminist literary genre of its own by offering alternative histories of female protagonists and detailed portrayal of their socio-cultural experiences before, during, and after the massacre. This will enable the readers to understand the differential experiences of lower caste women based on the triple burden of caste, gender and class that are enforced upon them. Thulla et al. (2002, p. 54) comparative study of real and fictional women in literature shows that fictional representation of real-life women is effective as "literary texts are indeed appropriate tools for the purpose of emancipation of women". By focusing on the female experiences the literature on Dalit massacres can have both advocative and emancipatory effects on women.

Historical Representations

Female survivors are seldom identified in the non-fictional materials – essays, newspaper reports and documentaries – that were considered for this study. Anonymisation or denial of identity of the survivors also leads to a homogenisation of their experiences as seen in the newspaper articles and Sivaraman's essays. Mana Goldar is the only female survivor featured in the oral history of the Marichjhapi massacre. Fewer representations also result in gaps in how their experiences are portrayed. For example, the participation of Dalit women in the protest for an increase in wages at Kilvenmani is often overlooked in most non-fiction narratives, with Kandasamy's semi-fictional novel being the sole exception. The socio-cultural identities of women as care-giver (especially maternal bond), Dalit labourer (in Kilvenmani) and Dalit refugee women (in Marichjhapi) are also less explored in the historical representations. Upper caste female narratives are very less and only Byapari highlights the gendered experiences of the Dalit refugees in camps who were unable to perform

their duties as care-givers. The historical female representations of Kilvenmani are mainly focused on feminist activists like Mythily Sivaraman and Krishnamma Jaganathan, who were involved in the rehabilitation of the survivors. The dearth in historical representations of female survivors leads to overlooking of the denial of legal justice especially in terms of sexual violence and abuse.

It is difficult to acquire data on the real female survivors of both the massacres though multiple sources were consulted which is in stark contrast to the large number of male narratives that are available in newspaper reports and other sources. Female survivors are mostly unnamed and homogenised as victims in the newspaper reports and other non-fictional narratives of the two massacres that are studied here. They are often identified as someone's wife or mother thereby denying them agency. A notable difference in the narrative of Marichjhapi is observed in Sen (2015) and Mallick (2024) as they identify the presence of female police officers as perpetrators of the violence in Marichjhapi which further complicates theorising the gendered experiences of the survivors. Attempts to locate the survivors as part of field work also turned out to be futile as it was difficult to physically locate the survivors or obtain translators or insiders from the villages for conducting the study.

Real and fictional Settings

Spatial segregation is mentioned in almost all the fictional and non-fictional narratives of both the massacres. The novels make use of real settings or places that are closer to Kilvenmani whereas the films use fictional settings. Of the seven fictional texts of Kilvenmani considered for the study, three of the texts use fictional spaces *(Kann Sivanthal Mann Sivakum*, *Aravindhan*, *Asuran)*, two use real places close to Kilvenmani (*Chorapuzha*, *Heat*) and two make use of Kilvenmani as the site of the massacre (*The Gypsy Goddess*,

Virumaandi). Lusibari (fictional) and Marichjhapi of the Sunderbans constitute the primary settings of Marichjhapi massacre whereas Kumirmari becomes a setting in the photobook (Bose). Fictional spaces used in the narratives on both the massacres are either similar to the real sites of the massacre showing similarities in terms of caste-based segregation and landscape descriptions or they are located close to the actual sites of the massacres. Consequently, there are clear intersections between the real and the fictional spaces, as shown in the figures 28 and 29, that point to a possible existing third space (Soja 1996) where the real and the fictional survivors co-exists at the site of the massacre. Soja's notion of third space or 'real-and-imagined places' integrates the real (first space) and the mental places (second spaces) that one encounters in life and Westphal's geocriticism offers the ways to connect the imaginary spaces of art to the real world through a multifocal and geocentered approach.
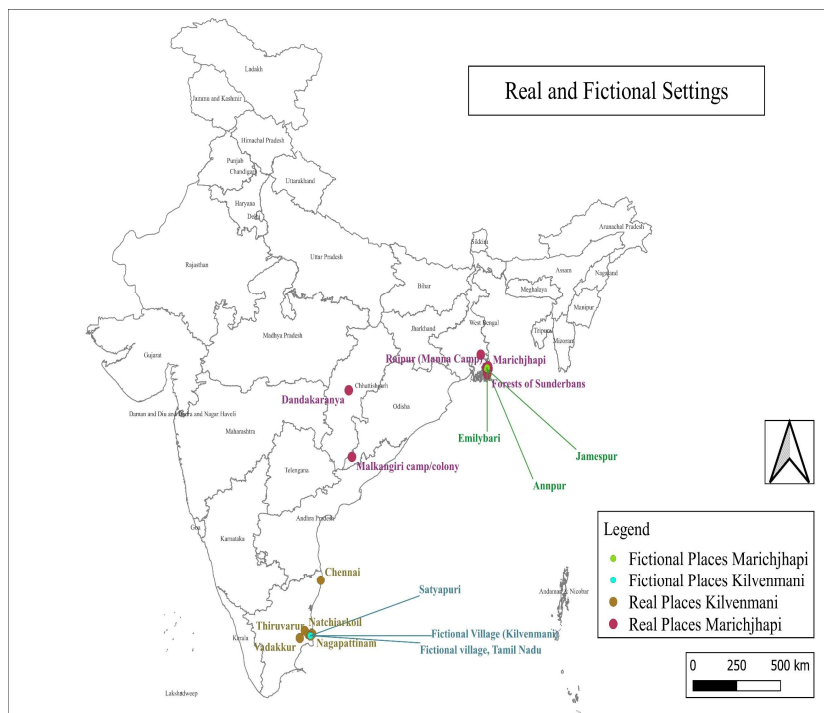
Figure 28: Comparison of the Real and Fictional Settings of the
Kilvenmani and Marichjhapi Massacres

According to Joliveau (2009) the intersections between real and fictional spaces also results in 'jetsetting' or cultural tourism where he states that geolocating imaginary places in real worlds using advanced geospatial technologies will increase tourism and contribute to the development of these places. He states, "[g]eospatial technologies contribute to the development of an intermediary territory, a space between the real world and the fantasy world" (44) where the "real spaces can be transformed by the imaginary spaces they are connected with" (39).
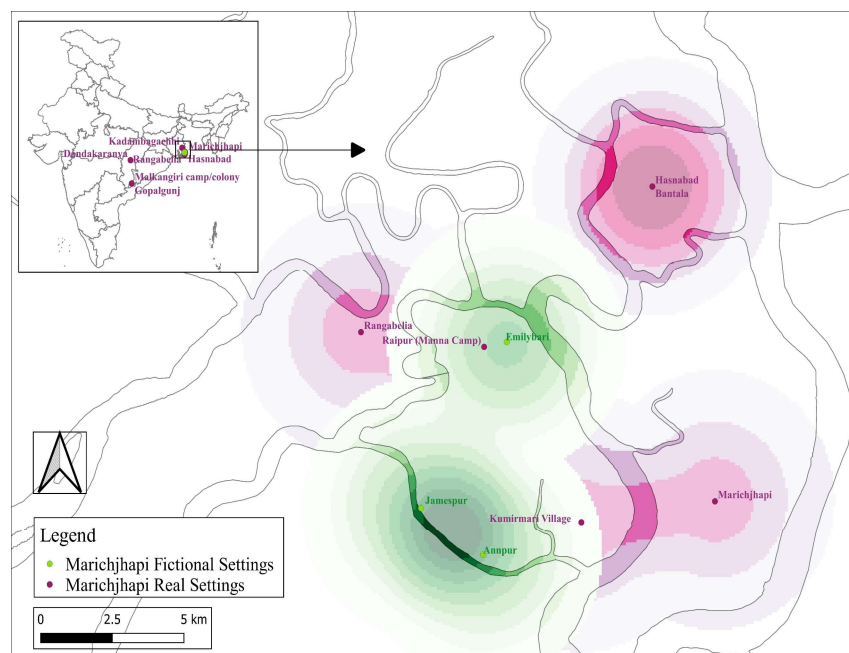
Figure 29: Heat Map Developed Using Kernel Density Estimation to Visualise the Intersections of Real and Fictional Spaces of the Marichjhapi Massacre

The third space or intersectional spaces are also referred to as "spaces of transgression—areas where different spaces dissolve, amalgamate, cover one another, or move over/through another" (Juvan 2004, p. 87). Locating the existence of such spaces of transgression, third space or an intermediary space in the case of Dalit massacres using geocriticism and GIS will not only result in an increased public

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attention to these places but also shed light on the historical and imagined realities of the places in terms of their space, caste and gender relations (figure 29). Though the potential of such spaces is yet to be explored in Dalit literature, third space references are indirectly stated by Ghosh (2005) and Mallick (2024) in their works. They suggest that Marichjhapi, as an intermediary space would have become a 'safe haven' for the Dalits – symbolising Dalit liberation through socio-economic independence.

We also found that fictional settings allowed writers to explore the causes and events of the massacre without risking the socio-political repercussions of using real names. The freedom offered by fictional setting helped authors address "the unspeakable" and give voice to the "unheard and unseen realities" (Müller et al. 2018, p. 25) of the event. The fictional "places created by writers, painters, film directors or game developers have the ability to transform the way we perceive the world by envisioning new dimensions of representations of reality" (Joliveau 2009, p. 36). Accordingly, the textual and visual narratives with fictional settings were able to offer alternative perspectives, and counter memories of the massacres especially from the caste, gender and spatial angle of the massacre. Satyapuri, Lusibari, and Thekkur represent safer imaginative geographies created by the authors that are located closer to the actual site of the massacre. These spaces provide authors with the opportunity to investigate subjects often neglected in conventional historical accounts such as caste-based segregation in rural India and the caste-gender violence that occurs during Dalit massacres, while ensuring their personal safety. In contrast, the use of real settings and direct references to the massacre helps in engaging the audience and in creating a curiosity to explore the event in detail. Indirect references and fictional settings, however, carry the risk of the massacre narrative becoming overshadowed within the broader narrative unless it forms the main theme of the narrative. Real settings

when employed in fictional narratives like films increases tourist engagements (Butler 2011), and initiates public discourse on the place and the events discussed.

Gendered Spaces of Caste

The space-caste-gender relations in the massacres studied result in the creation of gendered spaces of caste – namely upper caste female spaces and Dalit female spaces. This proves that women's experiences of the same place vary significantly based on their intersectional identity of gender and caste. Upper caste women are situated in casteist spaces of security due to the creation of gendered spaces of caste hierarchies (extending on Ambedkar's (1935) notion of spatial hierarchy of caste) as opposed to the lower caste women who cluster in specific spots, as in Kilvenmani, Thekkur, and Marichjhapi, which render them vulnerable to caste and gender-based violence. This relation between the spatial location of the survivors and the intensity of exploitation suggests that space should be considered as a category while analysing the intersectional identity of Dalit women. As, the caste-based geographical location and vulnerability of Dalit female exploitation are directly proportional. Space, caste and gender relations are evident in both the massacres that are considered for this study.

The conditions of females in these clustered spaces – as female Dalit refugees and labourers are left unexplored in the existing narratives. Some binary spaces of upper and lower caste observed in Kilvenmani are Meletheru and the unnamed lower caste area in *Kuruthipunal*; Thekkur and Vadakkur in *Heat* whereas in Marichjhapi, Kolkata/Lusibari and Marichjhapi/refugee camps forms the binary gendered spaces of upper and lower caste respectively. Some portions of Lusibari have a mixed population – upper caste and lower caste women – revealing space as shifting and characterised by 'difference' (Wrede 2015). Kilvenmani, Nagapattinam, Marichjhapi and refugee

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camps are Dalit female spaces identified in the study. Kilvenmani and Marichjhapi therefore becomes feminist geographical codes that evokes the female experiences of the massacre. The post-massacre scenario in both the massacres indicate that the space-caste-gender equations are still remaining the same and the survivors are awaiting justice.

Gender-based Violence

Gender-based violence in the form of physical and sexual assault is present in both the massacres. Rape is mentioned only in *The Gypsy Goddess* and *Ramayyahvin Kudisai* of Kilvenmani whereas *The Hungry Tide*, *Where the Birds Never Sings*, *Blood Island*, *Interrogating My Chandal Life* and *Reconstructing Marichjhapi* mentions the rape that occurred during the Marichjhapi massacre. Though there are some descriptions about sexual assault against upper caste women before and during the massacre (Pankajam and Arundhathi of *Kann Sivanthal Mann Sivakum*) Dalit women are more vulnerable to gender-biased violence (Irudayam et al. 2014) as they are perceived to be sexually available to the upper caste men. Gender-biased violence stems from the societal devaluation of female sexuality based on their caste identity or low social status. Diwakar (2022) states,

> [i]dentity plays a crucial role in the social sphere and determines our position as being dominant or subordinate. For instance, an upper caste woman is viewed as superior, pure and culturally respectable in contrast to a lower-caste woman, who is usually considered as inferior, impure and untouchable (as per her caste identity and graded inequality). Paradoxically, the caste identity of a woman also determines the nature of violence perpetuated on her. In this respect, the infliction of violence against the integrity of a woman must be

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seen as a gender-based violence and gender-biased violence (199-200).

The perpetrators of violence vary in the two massacres as the upper caste and their henchmen commits violence in one and police brutality operates in another. Women are raped and then killed intentionally to dishonour the communities and for "ethnic cleansing" (Mallick 2024). The Dalit female body is exploited by the upper castes as a tool to reinforce their dominant position within the caste hierarchy (Sabharwal 2015). In spite of this, rape and other gender-based violence are underrepresented in the fictional and non-fictional narratives of both the massacres. There are no legal cases on rape and sexual violence on the massacres as "the rape of Dalit women, even when they are more gruesome, are not taken seriously by mainstream politics, media and judiciary" (Diwakar 2022).

Post Violence Lives of the female survivors

The conditions of the survivors remain the same even after the massacre with the villages retaining the space-caste-gender relations that led to the massacre. Endogamous marriages and caste exploitation lingers which highlights the need for socio-cultural reforms that can eliminate caste and gender discrimination and the consequent spatial segregation of Dalits. The analysis of additional literature shows that the presence of feminist activists and organisations in case of the Kilvenmani massacre rehabilitation of the Dalit survivors as opposed to the Marichjhapi massacre where the survivors are still awaiting rehabilitation. This indicates that integration women in policy making and legal proceedings will ensure justice and rehabilitation.

4.3.2 Comparisons Using Literary Theories and Techniques

Fictional and Non-fictional Narratives

The Kilvenmani massacre is prominently represented in popular culture, including literature and films, whereas the Marichjhapi massacre is extensively researched. The films on Kilvenmani massacre like *Asuran*, *Kann Sivanthal Mann Sivakum*, were able to initiate more public discussions about the massacre as evident in the newspaper articles and online discussions on the films, the photobook, and the massacre. The visual narratives including cinematic portrayals have a "profound emotional and instructive impact" as they directly show the massacre and the torching of the huts which can inspire the audience to read more about the violence (Eltringham 2008). The impact of visual narratives in transmitting the collective memory of traumatic events have been explored in detail by Zelizer (2000) in the context of Holocaust and Eltringham (2008) in the context of genocide. However, the potential of popular visual media, such as films, to preserve the memory of Dalit female experiences of massacres are yet to be fully realized. Besides, the fictional accounts of both massacres are predominantly told from a male perspective, centered around male protagonists, overlooking the contributions of feminist organizations and female labourers. Such counter-factual historical fiction (Kakimova and Salgaro 2024) employed by the authors for greater reader acceptance affects public perceptions of the massacres.

There are common narrative techniques that are employed in the works on Kilvenmani and Marichjhapi massacres for popular acceptance that are described in detail in the previous section. Use of fictional and real settings, using male protagonists, direct and indirect references to the massacre, and fictional characters that resemble real survivors are some among them. Semi-fictional works are another commonality in the narratives studied – *The Gypsy Goddess* (on Kilvenmani) and *Where the Birds Never Sings* (on Marichjhapi). These narratives that are similar to ethnographic fiction were also successful in foregrounding the massacres in public discourse.

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Ethnographic fiction "claims to draw on actual data gathered by the researcher in the field" (Sparkes 2002, p. 2) as evident in Kandasamy's work that combines fiction and facts gathered by the author during her visit to the village of Kilvenmani. Semi-fictional narratives can therefore act as a platform to question dominant narratives of Dalit massacres, and to uncover the untold, often silenced experiences of women who survived this violence.

The massacres explored in this study are more prominent in public discourse, which has led to the production of various fictional and non-fictional accounts. In contrast, lesser-known massacres, such as Tsundur and Bathani Tola massacres, have not received the same level of attention or narrative production. Literature, fictional and non-fictional, on Dalit massacres can serve as a medium to create awareness about the space, caste and gender relations that lead to violence against Dalits. This can be accomplished by integrating Dalit massacre into popular culture through literature and films, much like the widespread integration of Holocaust narratives as observed by Copeland (2003). Maes (2006) also establishes in her thesis on fictional representations of Holocaust in American women narratives that fictional narratives can act as "a meaningful tool to bridge and to draw attention to the gaps between experience and representation. It broadens the implications of bearing witness due to their discourses about the significant mediation of imaginary realities". Historical fiction on Dalit massacres can also be integrated into curriculum "[h]istorical fiction is a genre that engages and incites students' interest in learning about historical events" (Croix et al. 2024). Dalit massacre narratives can thus serve as an effective means to present alternative histories of these events, particularly by highlighting the often-over-looked stories of women survivors.

Dalit Feminism

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The Dalit feminist notion of 'differences' in experiences and intersectional identity are evident in the narratives upon close reading despite the absence of prominent female characters. The fictional narratives of Kilvenmani subverts reality through 'gendered heroism' (Fried 1997) by positioning male protagonists at the centre of the narrative for popular acceptance. Dalit women are stereotypically portrayed in literature and films in contrast to their assertiveness and resilience in real life. In a recent study on Dalit women representation in Telugu cinema, Nadamala and Tripathi (2024) states,

> The everyday discrimination against Dalit women and their inhumane and indecent treatment has never been a definite concern in mainstream literature (Guru, 1995, p. 2548; Gupta, 2007, pp. 28–30; Gohel, 2023, p. 7). Instead, they are constructed as mute sufferers of caste inequalities and oppression, intensifying their social exclusion (103).

This tendency to overlook and homogenise Dalit female experiences is also evident in the massacre narratives examined here. The role of feminist activists from Mythily Sivaraman to Kandasamy are overlooked in the popular fictional narratives especially films and Dalit women are depicted as powerless, awaiting rescue by a male saviour. Ghosh, along similar lines, makes use of Nirmal, as a lens to look at the massacre. Angela Kaathamuthu, Maayi, and Kusum are some exceptions as they are used to introduce the massacre into the narratives and these women in turn become allegorical to the massacre itself.

Land and female body become feminist geocritical carriers of traumatic memories, history, and culture in the fictional narratives of both the massacres. Ghosh's Lusibari and Marichjhapi exemplifies this. The frequent comparisons between land and the female body arise because both are often viewed as "as property or thing of

consumption" (Gohel 2023) that signifies the power of upper caste. Dalit female body symbolises the land that they work upon. The comparison also indirectly indicates the landownership patterns in South Asia as women were not allowed to own property. Agarwal (1995) in her pioneering work on gender and landownership writers, "[f]ew own land; even fewer can exercise effective control over it". As land ownership symbolizes power, denying women the right to own land allowed upper caste men to assert control over both the land and women.

The sexual violence against Dalit women can be traced to their caste and gender identity as in general they are considered to be "bereft of honour, and their sexuality is viewed with suspicion, easily accessible to any male of the dominant communities who can lay claim to it" (Diwakar 2022). This dominant mindset of the perpetrators further amplifies rape and sexual violence during Dalit massacres. Dalit feminist literature, including films, can raise awareness and drive socio-cultural changes to improve the conditions of Dalit women by offering counter-narratives. Kandasamy, for instance, makes use of female literary language as a code (cite) to create feminist geographies like Kilvenmani and Nagapattinam to offer a profound exploration of the intersectional identity of Dalit women. Dalit feminist writers and allies must work to preserve and highlight the stories of women who face double marginalization within mainstream (Dalit) narratives.

Authors

This study found that gender, caste and spatial location of the authors are reflected in the narratives that are produced on the massacre. The author's location shapes the narrative, with their familiarity and emotional connection to the landscape influencing the atmosphere and themes of the narrative (Matley 1987). The "knowledge, familiarity and feeling" between the place and the author

results in the creation of a bond that "involves a totality of influences, physical, cultural, social, and economic, which a person absorbs by living in a particular place at a particular time" (Matley 1987, p. 130). Here, authors located closer to the site of the massacre and with personal connections to the place produced narratives that highlight the space and caste dimensions of the event (as in Ross Mallick and Kandasamy). In terms of gender, the majority of authors on both the massacres are males belonging to upper caste and they are connected to the location of the massacre in some form or another. Seven of nineteen authors on Kilvenmani massacre and six of fourteen authors were women. The gender of the authors often influences their choice of protagonists, with most male authors opting for male leads and portraying Dalit women as passive spectators in order to better align with public preferences and societal expectations. This is observed in the narratives of both the massacres that are considered for this study. The disparity in gender representation and adherence to stereotypes are termed as "the gender agency gap" by Stuhler (2024) in a recent study that utilised computational approaches to prove the gendered bias of the authors in literature.

Female authors (Kandasamy, Kanagasabai) of Kilvenmani represented the nuances of the Dalit female experiences based on their own lived experiences. They belong to upper (Mythily Sivaraman) and lower caste (Meena Kandasamy) thereby highlighting the significance of allyship in Dalit feminist endeavours. The geo or earth centric approach of feminist geocriticism, which emphasizes diverse narratives from various authors, calls for more Dalit female writers to explore the massacre as a central theme in their works. "The widespread habit of limiting the scope of a research project to a single author often leads to a confined understanding of the author and his/her texts, which, in turn offers marginal results" (Nemesio 1999, p. 2). Production of more fictional and non-fictional narratives on the massacres will reignite the

memories of the massacre, especially that of the female survivors among public discourses.

Myths

Myths reflect a culture's views on life, death, the universe, and humanity's submission to a higher power (Over 1980) which in India is founded on the caste system. The fictional narratives on both the massacre therefore utilises myths and folklores to subvert the notion of purity-pollution of the caste system. Myths in India are used as a means to propagate and sustain the class (*varna*) and caste system along with its core practice of untouchability that classifies Dalits as impure/polluted while retaining the purity of Brahmins (Zene 2007). Dalit writers and allies are now making use of literature to subvert the hegemonic caste hierarchy embedded in myths by 'writing back' through *vidrōhī* literature which talks about the condition of the Dalits in independent India (Luhar and Nimavat 2021).

Vidrōhī means someone or something that opposes a particular idea or ideology to bring revolution. It connotes the idea of being rebellious or insurgent. The *Vidrōhī* literature opposes certain ideology or literary works that propagate a specific ideology by challenging, mimicking and adapting them. In India, the term '*vidrōhī* literature' is commonly used for the kinds of literatures that have challenged the ideology of the dominant upper castes. Such works of literatures include the literary outpourings of Dalit and Adivasi writers who tend to attack the unfair Brahminical values that have forced their communities to live a marginalized life (Luhar and Nimavat 2021, p. 2).

Female mythical characters are utilised in the narratives studied to subvert casteist notions by adopting and mimicking myths. The choice of a female mythical character as opposed to males is

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interesting as Dalit females are the most affected by the caste system propagated by Indian myths. The Centry Goddess of *Kuruthipunal* who transcends caste and spatial segregation by occupying a casteless space that marks the boundary between the upper caste and the lower caste is an example for this subversion of myths. Neelayadakshi of *The Gypsy Goddess* challenges the purity of the caste system through her colonial origins. Bon Bibi of Ghosh, on the other hand, acts as a tool to transmit indigenous knowledge and traditions across generations. In India, children learn about caste from parental/maternal figures, absorbing it alongside societal norms, which they then apply to their social reality, reinforcing caste ideologies (Kanoujia 2017). Introducing subversive myths early can help foster a critical mindset, particularly among lower-caste children who will learn to question such practices rather than essentialising them.

Cross-fictionality and Intertextuality

Cross-fictionality or cross-fictional narrative modes are used by Kandasamy (semi-fictional) and Ghosh in which the primary event is historical/non-fictional, but the narrative techniques used is fictional "resulting in a *cross-fictional* representation, fictional discursive modes in narrative realms outside of fiction" (Hatavara and Mildorf 2017, p. 404). Cross-fictional references to the burning of huts in the Kilvenmani massacre appear in both textual and visual narratives, leading to the creation of intertextual cinematic and textual cartographies. Cinematic cartography refers to "mapping out the human presence in the landscape in order to make visible human consequences" (Caquard and Taylor 2009, p. 7). *Asuran* and *Kann Sivanthal Mann Sivakum* makes use of cinematic cartography to 'rehumanise the maps' (Caquard and Taylor 2009) by locating the humans and their experiences within specific places. Creative non-fiction is a literary genre that is similar to cross-fictionality that uses

"events [that] actually happened but the factual evidence is being shaped and dramatized using fictional techniques" (Sparkes 2002, p. 5). Kandasamy's work fits into this genre as the writer becomes a character in the story and makes assessments functioning as a critic in creative non-fiction, as seen in *The Gypsy Goddess*. The author also uses such techniques to depict events in an aesthetic manner, rather than presenting them as mere dry facts (Sparkes 2002).

Intertextuality is another literary technique that is present throughout the narratives. Kristeva's (1996) concept of intertextuality, which suggests that texts derive meaning from other texts, discourses and sign systems, is often explained through spatial metaphors (Juvan 2004).

> Various and distinct spaces are assigned fixed positions within the constellation of the textual world: they can exist parallel to each other within the same ontology, they can be embedded in a larger whole within the same world, or they belong to different ontologies (represented in the text as material, psychic, medial, virtual, etc.) (Juvan 2004, p. 87).

The real and the fictional spaces in texts can either exist exclusive to each other or they may co-exist as in the case of Ghosh's Lusibari which can be geolocated within real spaces. The incorporation of imaginary spaces in literature that mirror real-world locations leads to the creation of literary maps. The literary maps thus created around the massacres themselves give rise to a "processual intertextuality" (Cooper and Priestnall 2011) among the narratives of the massacres. "Literary maps are textual systems of signification and association which are always practised within a spatial context" (Cooper and Priestnall 2011, p. 19) and helps in locating the "[e]motions [that] are tied to places through experience and memories, as well as perception and images" (Caquard and Taylor 2009).

Juvan (2004) while describing the intertextuality of space, classifies intertextual spatial transgression in literature as intertextual transpositions of other text 's space ("transposes fragments thereof from other texts, textual series, and intertexts") and intertextual evocations of other extratextual spaces (such as "stylisation or imitation of genre patterns, evoke "extratextual spaces" only indirectly, by use of connotation"). Both intertextual and intratextual evocations that "deterritorialize the point of view" (92) of the massacres are found among the narratives that are investigated in this study. Kilvenmani and Marichjhapi become intertextual narrative spaces that link the narratives, alongside intratextual references to the massacres, in the form of semi-fictional/cross-fictional, and thematic elements. In addition to spatial intertextuality, Kandasamy (2014) also makes intertextual references to other sources on the massacre, as well as to the real women activists who helped rehabilitate the survivors (pp21). Deep Halder (2019) and Ross Mallick (2024) also makes references to the other sources on the Marichjhapi. Such intertextual references result in the creation of textual archives or hyperlinks that can serve as a database for further research and reading on the massacres. Cross-fictionality and intertextuality hence act as spatial/hyperlinks that connects the readers to the other resources on the massacres.

4.4 Conclusions

This chapter investigates the ways to conduct comparative studies of two or more Dalit massacres in India by examining and adopting methodologies from history, cultural studies and literature. A combination of Comparative Historical Analysis (CHA) and Comparative Cultural Studies (CCS) is used in the chapter together with comparative literary concepts like thematic and narrative technique comparisons, cross-fictionality and intertextuality. A historical, cultural and literary comparisons of the case studies - the

Kilvenmani and the Marichjhapi massacres revealed similarities and differences in terms of events and experiences before, during and after the massacres. CHA and CCS revealed that the similarities and differences in the causal factors of the massacres by comparing the economic, political and cultural factors that led to the massacre. Similarities include coastal locations, socio-cultural identities of the targeted communities including caste and class, while a key difference is the involvement of a political party (CPIM) supporting the victims in one case and the perpetrators in another. A contextualised historical and cultural reading of the massacres shows that Dalit exclusion and unequal caste-based resource distribution drive the ongoing caste-class divide in India, where even minor disruptions can lead to caste-based violence and massacres.

The literary thematic exploration focuses on two key areas: 1. the intersection of gender and caste, and 2. the relationship between space and caste. These areas, in turn, illuminate the complex dynamics of space, caste, and gender in Dalit massacres. The fictional portrayals of the female survivors from both massacres highlight the differences in their experiences shaped by their intersectional identities. Rape and sexual violence, female body and land comparison, anonymisation and homogenised stereotypical portrayal of characters, intersectional dimensions of space, and resemblances to real survivors are some common threads observed in the fictional characters of the massacres. However, an in-depth exploration of the socio-cultural experiences of female characters, providing diverse perspectives and alternate histories of Dalit massacres, similar to those in Holocaust narratives, is still absent in fictional depictions. Historical female representations are few and often anonymized, leading to gaps in understanding gendered experiences, such as their roles as caregivers. The denial of justice to survivors of gender-based violence during the massacres is another

persistent issue, stemming from caste bias within the state, judiciary, and institutions.

The narratives use both real and fictional settings, each highlighting the caste-based spatial segregation in Indian villages. The digital cartographic study revealed the existence of a third space at the intersection of the real and the fictional spaces where the real and the fictional survivors co-exist. Such intermediary spaces in narratives can serve as a platform to illustrate the potential for a safe space for Dalit liberation and freedom while also sparking public discussions on Dalit massacres. The study also explores the advantages and disadvantages of using imaginative geographies and real settings in narratives, focusing on author safety, advocacy, and awareness on Dalit massacres. The space-caste-gender relations in the two massacres results in the creation of gendered spaces of caste where women cluster – namely upper caste female spaces and Dalit female spaces. However, the differential spatial experiences of women are not explored in the narratives studied. Women experienced space differently depending on their caste identity, even when situated within the same spaces proving our claim that space should be considered as an intersectional category while trying to understand Dalit female identity. Kilvenmani and Marichjhapi serve as powerful examples of Dalit feminist spaces that can be employed as geocritical codes – both real and fictional – in literature to uncover the complex interplay of space, caste, and gender in Dalit massacres in India.

Literary analysis of the narratives was also conducted based on fictional and non-fictional narratives, Dalit feminism, authors, myths, cross-fictionality and intertextuality. Upon a close examination of the visual narratives surrounding the massacres, we found that the writers are yet to fully explore its potential as a medium for highlighting and preserving the experiences of Dalit women. Use for

male protagonists for public acceptance, adherence to stereotypical depiction of Dalit women as passive, direct/indirect references to the massacre and the use of sei-fictional/ethnographic narration are some other common techniques used in the narratives. The massacres studied here are popular in public discourse which eventually led to the production of fictional and non-fictional narratives on the violences. Alternatively, literary and artistic works focused on other lesser-known Dalit massacres could help garner attention of researchers and the public and spark similar discussions.

The gender, caste and spatial locations of the authors also had a profound impact on the narratives on the massacres. Dalit female authors located closer to the site of the massacre and/or with personal connection to the place, like Kandasamy, were more focused on the gender-space-caste experiences of the massacre as opposed to male upper caste authors. The authors also used female mythical characters as a means to subvert the rigid practices of the caste system such as spatial segregation and untouchability. Cross-fictionality and intertextuality were also employed by the authors as a means to create a hyperlinked textual database of the narratives on the massacres. Such techniques present events aesthetically, and not just as dry facts.

The comparative study highlighted the similarities and differences in the events surrounding Dalit massacres—before, during, and after—while also examining the experiences of women and the related literary productions. The differences in the massacres stem from the fact that Marichjhapi is a state-sponsored massacre that is still denied by the state whereas the Kilvenmani is a carefully orchestrated by the upper-caste landlords with social capital. There are observable similarities in the space-caste-gender relations of the massacres as in both the massacres the spatial location of the Dalit women were determined by their caste which in turn made them vulnerable to

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gender-based violence during the massacres. This suggests that the findings can be applied to other Dalit massacres that have not received the same academic, judicial, and public attention as the case studies discussed here, given that caste and its practices are widespread throughout the country. This chapter contributes to contemporary Dalit scholarship in India by proposing and applying a methodology to compare the female experiences of two or more Dalit massacres, using comparative literary, historical, and cultural frameworks. It also aims to spark discussions on other lesser-known similar events in post-independence India. The findings and results of this chapter, along with those from Chapters 2 and 3, are further emphasized in the next chapter on spatial archives, which also explores the challenges and possibilities of creating such an archive.

Chapter 5

Possibilities and Tensions in Creating a Spatial Archive of the Female Survivors of Dalit Massacres in India: "Cartographies of Courage: Fictional Threads, Real Lives"

Neither cartography nor narrative on their own can capture the essence of place: both are required to get a better sense of it.

- Sebastién Caquard

This chapter consolidates our practical experiences in the process of creating a spatial archive entitled, *Cartographies of Courage: Fictional Threads, Real Lives*, on the female survivors of selected Dalit massacres in India. The archive includes visualizations, analyses, and findings related to space, gender, and caste dynamics in Dalit massacres, as discussed in chapters 2, 3 and 4. The chapter examines the methods employed, challenges faced, and the impact of the archive on future research in this field. The initial section of the chapter defines and establishes geospatial archives in digital humanities before proceeding to the spatial archive that is created as part of this doctoral thesis. The next section gives the background to the project – its aims and scope and the project structure. The methodology used for the creation of the spatial archive including the data, tools, technologies and the creation of spatial hypertexts is detailed in the next section. The analysis of materials and the creation of maps are conducted using feminist geocriticism and digital cartography, as discussed in Chapters 1, 2, and 3. The next section describes the possibilities and tensions in creating an Indian feminist geospatial archive in DH while documenting the lessons learnt during the creation of the project. The chapter concludes with the limitations of the spatial archive and the scope for doing DH in the global South. This chapter offers a workflow for the creation of Indian feminist

geospatial projects using a prototype of the first open-access spatial archive of female survivors of Dalit massacres in India. The chapter contributes to the current DH and literary scholarship in the sub-continent by offering innovative ways for sharing research on marginalised histories that can engage both academic communities and the public.

5.1 Introduction

"An archive consists of records which have been selected for permanent or long-term preservation for their historical value, enduring research value, operational needs and risk of content loss. . . Digital archive seeks to preserve the information in digital format regardless of media on which that information is stored (Niven 2011)" (Yadav 2016, p. 63). Digital archives not only increased the access to rare manuscripts and texts but also introduced the readers to analyse the materials in newer ways like non-linear reading (Stokes 2013). Digital archiving is increasingly used in digital humanities (DH) projects where "archival materials combine traditional humanities research with computational methods" (Note 2022). In fact, the beginning of DH projects could be traced to building of "digital archives, databases, and tools to provide access to materials—projects that resembled the work of libraries more than scholars" (Stokes 2013, p. 7). The 'spatial turn' in traditional humanities and DH had its influence on DH archival projects as well, resulting in the creation of geospatial projects within the newly evolved field of geospatial humanities.

> Geospatial humanities are a significant and rapidly growing branch of the digital humanities and constitutes the practice of applying Geographical Information Systems (GIS) and other quantitative technologies to the study of the representation of spatiality in texts, often to literary or historical content. A

multitude of geospatial humanities projects involve geovisualizing literary texts (El Khatib and Schaeben 2020).

Even digital archives are now using GIS-based spatio-temporal linking of archival materials to enable the users to query and access data depending on geographical or temporal information (Belton 2019). The use of GIS in humanities research is also variously termed as Geohumanities (Harris et al. 2011) and humanities GIS (Kretzschmar 2013).

Geospatial archives are another form of digital archives that uses geospatial technologies to archive important multimedia documents. Geospatial DH projects are numerous, as most DH centres (like the ones in Lancaster University, IUPUI: The Polis Centre and Ghent Centre for Digital Humanities among others) are now investing in developing GIS based literary and historical projects. Some examples of geospatial DH projects *are Deep Map and Spatial Narrative Project at the IUPUI* and the *Deep Map of the English Lake District* at Lancaster University. These projects have successfully blended multiple forms of media, line images, annotated texts and georeferenced historical maps on a single base map.

Authorial London by the Stanford University and *Artists in Paris* by Queen Mary University of London are other examples of interactive web-map based spatial humanities project. The former allows the readers to switch between different base maps whereas the later allows the reader to visualise year wise data on a static geo-referenced base map, i.e., the base map remains the same while the readers switch between the year-wise data of the artists in 18th century Paris. The current geospatial projects in DH, as evident from the above examples, are mostly interactive maps with hyperlinked media that can be improved by the incorporation of geographical hypermaps. The use of geographical hypermaps with elaborate details will further help the

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readers to better understand the spatial relations of the topic under consideration. The *Artists in Paris* project, for example, can be improved by providing a single hypermap as base-map with interactive points to year-wise geographical maps. In this way the readers will be able to understand the spatial changes over the years which resulted in the clustering of artists in specific locations.

While there are multiple definitions available for archives and digital archives, the term geospatial archive, especially in the context of Digital Humanities (DH), is not defined. This is because of the reluctance to use the terms such as 'spatial archive' or 'geospatial archive' by DH projects that utilise digital geospatial technologies to archive historical events. El Khatib and Schaeben (2020), for example, argues for the geospatial mapping of literary texts using a prototype of a project on *Paradise Lost* without referring to the archival nature of the project. Consequently, there are existing literature on geospatial archives in DH (Foley and Murphy 2015; Hu et al. 2018) that provide methodology and steps in creating DH based geospatial archives. Expanding on such research, in this paper we define geospatial archives in DH as, open-access DH projects that connect historical, narrative and or textual materials with geospatial coordinates for long-term preservation. The project then visualises the materials to physical place/s using an interactive digital map which in turn serve as a geospatial archive of the materials facilitating further analysis.

Geospatial archives in DH can be classified using multiple criteria. Thematic classification reveals archives on 1). social constructs such as race and gender (*Colonial Frontier Massacres, Australia, 1788 to 1930*; *Mapping Women's Suffrage 1911*; 2). on literature, especially maps on places in literature and literary authors (*Geospatial Innovation: A Deep Map of the Lake District; Authorial London*); 3). on History (*The Atlas of early Printing*; *Renewing*

Inequality: Family Displacement Through Urban Renewal, 1950-1966;
ORBIS) and 4). on Culture (*Going to the Show*) to name a few. On close reading the above examples, we can identify some of the important characteristics of geospatial archives in DH as: open-access availability of the project website, use of spatial or geographical datasets, interactive map and map-like visualisation and the availability of multimedia data through the maps.

This chapter focuses on the practical process of creating a geospatial archive. It outlines the possibilities and tensions in creating a spatial archive of the female survivors of Dalit massacres in India using the example of the *Cartographies of Courage: Fictional Threads, Real Lives* project. This open-access spatial archive is a work in progress and currently maps the fictional and non-fictional survivors of the Kilvenmani massacre and the Marichjhapi massacre. The primary goal of this chapter is to develop a theoretical and methodological workflow for creating an Indian geospatial humanities project in DH from ground up. It also documents the possibilities and tensions experienced while creating the archive, with the intention of helping and guiding future researchers interested in developing similar projects in the Indian context. The chapter focuses on the creation, curation and utilisation of spatial databases for DH projects, especially the ones that focus on literary texts with real and imaginary places. The rationale behind the project, project structure, data curation, ethics and lessons from the project is elaborated in the chapter along with the sustainability and reproducibility considerations of the project. Besides the spatial archive, the project website also contains educational resources including syllabus templates that can help in incorporating the project and related themes into existing Dalit and DH pedagogy and curriculum.

5.2 The Project: *Cartographies of Courage: Fictional Threads, Real Lives*

Foley and Murphy (2015) are among the pioneering researchers to theorise on creating a spatial archive in the context of Digital Humanities. They elaborate upon the methodologies to create a geospatial archive in DH using case studies of existing projects. They see deep maps or spatial archive with a GIS-based approach as a way to facilitate the users and the researchers to "interrogate and analyse spatial information, so that the users of this information are presented with a much deeper and richer experience" (4) of the place. However, the primary goal in building geospatial archives or "the research to date in the field of digital spatial humanities has been centred on questions of history, heritage and historiography" (Roberts 2014). The application of GIS to study literary texts or literary corpora is termed as 'literary GIS' (Piatti 2016). El Khatib and Schaeben (2020) states that creating geospatial literary projects provides: 1. an open-access online project that can ensure a greater visibility of the research; 2. an annotated geo-edition of the literary text with excerpts on the places mentioned in the text; and 3. act as a tool for users to explore and formulate their own questions regarding the spatial aspects of the text. They also propose a data pipeline model for ensuring the sustainability of digital literary projects. Building on the advantages of a literary GIS project and the existing pipelines and models, this section and sun-sections elaborates on the background, rationale, scope, and structure of the geospatial archive created as part of this doctoral work.

Cartographies of Courage: Fictional Threads, Real Lives is an open access spatial archive on the female survivors of selected Dalit massacres in independent India. The aim of this archive is to make use of digital cartography and feminist geocriticism as a hybrid methodology to foreground the stories of the Dalit female survivors of

selected massacres. The project is under development and will be subjected to constant updating as it advances in its different phases of completion. The current first phase of the project examines two prominent Dalit massacres of the 1960s and 1970s: 1. Kilvenmani Massacre, Tamil Nadu (1968) and 2. Marichjhapi Massacre, West Bengal (1979). The next phase will incorporate the major massacres from each decade following Indian independence (1947) up to the year 2020. The final phase in future will identify and incorporate all Dalit massacres in India to provide a comprehensive resource/database of the female survivors – both historical and fictional representation of the survivors. Following the methodologies elaborated in the previous chapters the project makes use of non-fictional texts, newspapers, letters, brochures and documentaries to locate the historical representations. Fictional texts and films are consulted to understand the fictional representations. There are two major parts to the archive – one is the online and offline academic outputs generated as part of the doctoral work namely research articles and the thesis and the other is the website with the interactive cartographic output or the spatial archive – two separate, yet deeply interconnected components of the research process, that will together result in public and academic discussions of Dalit massacre.

5.2.1. Project Rationale, Aims and Scope

Digital humanities projects have the potential to provide visibility to the unheard voices of marginalised communities across the world. Several existing geospatial projects of similar theme have inspired the development of this spatial archive on Dalit massacres, some of which are mentioned here. *Native Land Digital* is a digital humanities project that makes use of maps and other resources to "create and foster conversations about the history of colonialism, Indigenous ways of knowing, and settler-Indigenous relations, through

educational resources and Territory Acknowledgement Guide" in Canada, a history that was overlooked until recently. *Mapping Women's Suffrage 1911*, according to the project website, enables the users "to identify and map the locations, together with the lives and materials, of as many votes for women campaigners as possible in cities, towns and villages across England in 1911". The curated data on the women campaigners allows the users to draw patterns and conduct spatial analysis resulting in new findings and analysis. A project that closely resembles the spatial archive created as part of this thesis is the *Colonial Frontier Massacres in Australia, 1788-1930*, that "identifies and record sites of frontier massacres of Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous people across Australia from 1788 to 1930" (Colonial, n.d.). The project by the Australian University of New Castle is a pioneer archive on curating spatial data on victims of mass violence especially massacres. The above projects enabled us to devise new and innovative ways of spatio-historical storytelling of Dalit massacres.

Drawing from and building upon the above projects, this geospatial archive aims to be a prototype for curating neglected histories of marginalised communities in India especially at the cross-sections of gender, space, and caste. There are also other online projects focused on Dalits in India that has to be acknowledged here, though they do not explicitly present themselves as digital humanities or archival projects. *Dalit Camera* is an example for "how historically disadvantaged Dalits, or 'Untouchables', are leveraging digital tools to narrate their oppressive past to the outside world parallel to the rise of political censorship in India" (Paul and Dowling 2018, p. 1). The project makes use of a website and a YouTube channel to record the "news, narratives, public meetings, songs, talks, and discussions on Dalits and other underrepresented sections of the Indian society" (2). Digital archiving in this context plays a crucial role in promoting Dalit

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social movements of resistance, serving as a form of social protest and raising awareness. (Paul and Dowling 2018).

Encouraged by such pioneering endeavours, this first Indian geospatial archive on Dalit massacres, aims to fill the gaps in understanding Dalit massacres in independent India especially from space, gender and caste vantage points. The lack of official documentation of the massacres coupled with scarce legal, academic, journalistic and political interventions motivated us to document the massacres at the site of their occurrence. This project fills a critical gap in the accessibility and analysis of Dalit massacres in India by becoming a pioneering digital resource for future researchers, and by supplying open-access theoretical and methodological insights for developing similar geospatial DH projects in the global south. Mapping the massacres and publicising its gendered narratives through an open-access archive also influences the way geographical spaces are experienced by both the contemporary generations in India and by tourists within and outside the sub-continent. It can provide insights into the marginalised spatial histories of the Dalits as well as their experiences over years by motivating the academia and the public to learn about parallel neglected histories. Ultimately, the archive aims to make a lasting contribution to both the field of digital humanities and Dalit scholarship by providing innovative approaches for using technology to explore Dalit issues. The primary aim of the archive is to provide the scholars and the public with a comprehensive, interactive geospatial resource on the massacre, allowing for a deeper understanding of the space, caste and gender relations in Dalit massacres in India. This is achieved by:

1. offering a digital platform that identifies and records the sites of prominent Dalit massacres in India post-independence.

2. creating deep maps of the female fictional and non-fictional survivors of the massacre as spatial hypertexts.

3. providing the first Indian record of Dalit massacres "that is comprehensive, based on a rigorous methodology, with well-structured data and a map, and providing the available evidence" for each Dalit massacre site (Colonial, n.d.).

4. initiating public and scholarly discussions about Dalit massacres by offering greater visibility of the research.

5. providing open-access and reproducible knowledge to the public/academicians that motivate the users to think critically.

6. inviting contributions through crowd-sourcing.

The scope of the project is limited to India at present – the prominent sites of the massacre and the timeframe considered is after independence (from 1947 to 2020). Currently the project includes only the Kilvenmani massacre and the Marichjhapi massacre although the final phase of the project will contain all Dalit massacres of the time frame. The spatial data of the survivors and related themes are collected from both fictional and non-fictional sources.

5.2.2. Project Structure

The project *Cartographies of Courage: Fictional Threads, Real Lives* is created by Jyothi Justin under the guidance of Prof. Nirmala Menon at Indian Institute of Technology Indore (IITI). There are different stages to the mapping and setting up of the project, the methodology and application of which are elaborated in chapter 1, 2, and 3 respectively. This section details the structure of the project website and the creation of the spatial archive. The deliverables of the project can be divided into two – the textual ones including the thesis and research articles and the online website with the spatial archive. During the initial parts of the project, fictional and non-fictional sources of the female survivors were identified, scrapped and analysed

using digital cartography and feminist geocriticism. The creation of a spatial database of the survivors and other related details facilitated their preliminary mapping using QGIS software (the map images of which are included in Chapter 2 and 3). The final part of the project, which involved setting up a website for the spatial archive and creating a base map with spatial hypertexts, received support from the CLS INFRA TNA fellowship, with the home institute being UNED-LINHD Madrid. The project is published as an open-access geospatial archive through KSHIP, IITI and further made accessible through social media to garner public attention.

The website consists of the following sections: Home, the Project, Spatial Archive, the Kilvenmani Massacre, the Marichjhapi Massacre, Educational Resources, and Team/Contact. The home page, refer figure 30, gives an overview of the project, its mission, along with an introduction and links to the major sections of the website. A brief introduction to the theoretical and methodological section along with the research outputs are offered in *The Project* section. The section on the spatial archive contains a brief introduction to the spatial archive, its features and a base map with interactive points on the Kilvenmani and the Marichjhapi massacres. There are also detailed sections on each of the two massacres that are studied in detail as part of this doctoral thesis. The educational resources section contains teacher's guides and syllabus templates/resources on incorporating the archive, Dalit massacres, Humanities GIS and other related topics into curriculum. It also contains the curated list of newspaper reports on the massacres and a comprehensive bibliography of the massacres. The type of data used to create the archive, along with the data protection measures, reproducibility, sustainability and ethical considerations implemented for the study and the data, are outlined in the section entitled Data & Ethics. The spatial database will be available to

researchers for reproducible research, with access provided upon request due to the sensitive nature of the data. The map images created using QGIS are collated and are available for user reference and download in the gallery. Similarly, the online newspapers used for mapping are also downloadable. There is also provision for the users to contact the project team on the website and submit data on the massacres through crowdsourcing.

Figure 30: Screenshot of the Home Page of the Project Website

5.3 Methodology

This section details the methodologies used for the creation and proliferation of the spatial archive.

5.3.1 Data, Tools, and Technologies

The data on the survivors and other related themes are manually scraped and stored as .csv (comma separated values) files which is later mapped using QGIS. GIS was chosen to present the data, as it can store both spatial and attribute data in a relational database, enabling complex analysis and data visualization (Foley and Murphy 2015) and by "using maps, we can narrate stories about places, locations, events, processes, objects, and issues" (Jankowska 2021).

Data is manually cleaned and standardised with the coordinates for mapping obtained from Google My Maps. The metadata consists of source text, text annotations, and other details that are related to the space, gender and caste dimensions of the massacres. The project website along with the spatial archive is created after the initial database creation, mapping and analysis of the real and the fictional survivors of the two selected massacres using feminist geocriticism and digital cartography. The paid version of WordPress is used to build the project website, in order to meet the specific customization requirements of the project. The domain is supplied by the home institution of the project, IITI, and the project URL is <u>https://mappingmassacres.iiti.ac.in/</u>. The project can be accessed either via direct search or through IITI KSHIP portal (https://iitikship.iiti.ac.in/). The next step is to create the most significant part of the website – the spatial archive. We developed a prototype (figure 31) of the archive using the QGIS map images that had already been created, to better understand the structure and methodology of the archive. The final archive on completion of the project is envisioned to have either google map or open street map (OSM) as its base map. This base map will serve as the entry point through which the users can access the detailed visualization and analysis of specific massacres. The base map or the primary map in the archive is an interactive visualization of the different Dalit massacres in post independent India as shown in figure 35 (a).

Figure 31: Prototype for Creating a Spatial Hypertext in the Spatial Archive. From top left to right: First image is a screenshot of the base map of selected Dalit massacres. Upon clicking on any massacre, it takes the reader to the data visualisation on that massacre (here the Marichjhapi massacre) which is shown in the second image. The various data maps on the second map when clicked, will take the readers to detailed mapping of the specific feature selected such as the location of the female survivors, location of refugee camps, location of prominent authors among others.

Selecting a specific massacre on the base map enables the user to access hypermaps or spatial hypertexts of the specific massacre and the different visualizations. The Dalit female survivors (represented through points) on the hypermap of a particular massacre will further contain data on the survivors in different forms like image, text and video among others. Here we can see that both the base map (on Dalit massacres) and the specific map on a massacre act as geographic hypermaps. An example of this is shown in figure 31. A mouse click on a particular massacre in the base map will take the readers to a map of all data visualization on that massacre. Here the example of Marichjhapi massacre is shown in the figure 31. Further interaction

with each data point on Marichjhapi massacre will redirect the reader to a detailed map of the particular feature selected. For example, the selection of refugee camps will lead to a map on the location of the refugee camps associated with the massacre whereas clicking on the authors will re-direct the readers to the location of authors of the works associated with the massacre. The hypermaps that details on a specific feature of the massacre will therefore enable the readers to understand the geocentric narratives associated with the massacre. In addition to the information given in the archive, the readers will also be able to come up with their own interpretation of the data that are visualized in the geo-spatial archive. The prototyping described here motivated us to explore the concept of spatial hypertexts which is detailed in the next section.

5.3.2 Spatial Hypertexts: Enhancing Geospatial Narratives

Hypertext has different definitions in different disciplines like literature and computer science (Wardrip-Fruin 2004). "Hypertext is text which is not constrained to be linear; Or it's the text which contains links/references to other texts (that a reader can immediately access). The term was coined by Ted Nelson around 1965" (Ganore n.d., p. 1). Hypertext and hyperlinks are related concepts that are often discussed together. "Hypertext is built upon the singular premise inherent in its basic definition, linked text, including all its possibilities both structurally and semantically" whereas "Hyperlinking includes the basic feature that any section of content, whether visual, spatial, or textual, can be associatively linked to others based on a discrete semantic relationship" (Lang and Baehr 2023, p. 53). In simple terms hypertext refers to the text containing the hyperlink and hyperlink is comprised of URLs. "Hypertext documents are interconnected by hyperlinks, which are typically activated by a mouse click, keypress set or by touching the screen" (Ganore n.d., p. 1-2).

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The most common type of hypertext, document-centred hypertext which provided hyperlinks connecting documents, had limitations as users can get lost in the hyperspace of large networks of interconnected documents (Solis and Ali 2010). Spatial hypertext therefore emerged as an alternative to document-centred ones. "Spatial hypertext is a kind of hypermedia that is based on using visual and spatial characteristics to define relations among hypertext elements, which are seen as 'sticky notes'or bibliographic cards that can hold hypermedia content (text, images, hyperlinks, etc.)" (Solis and Ali 2010, p. 238). Shipman and Marshall (1999, p. 2) states that spatial hypertexts "allows users to take advantage of their visual memory and pattern recognition". Spatial hypertext is generally used to refer to network maps (without visible lines connecting the different elements) with nodes and links and not geographical maps. *Critspace* (Audenaert et al. 2008) is an example of a literary project that makes use of similar spatial hypertexts. This project focuses on the works of Picasso, and "provides an HTML based interface for accessing the collection maintained by the Picasso Project that contains nearly 14,000 artworks (including documents) and 9,500 biographical entries" (Audenaert et al. 2008, p. 51). The readers are able to interact with the resources by browsing through them, resize and crop the images and add related information from external web links.

As part of this study, we propose the use of digital geographical maps as spatial hypertexts or hypermaps within a geo-spatial DH archive which can further the deep mapping of the geolocation under study. "Laurini and Milleret-Raffort (1990) introduced the term 'hypermap', which they described as a multimedia hyperdocument with geographical access. Geographical access implies access by geographical coordinates. The idea behind the concept was the desire and ability to retrieve all documents related to a certain area" (Kraak and Driel 1997, p. 457). Hypermaps are therefore composed of

maps, multimedia objects and links among these objects (Voisard 1998). Hypermaps in the context of this study refers to the use of geographical maps as hyper document or base document upon which further georeferenced multimedia systems (including further geographical hypermaps/maps) are arranged. The base map will contain georeferenced hyperlinked maps or hypermaps and other multimedia containing more details about the places or areas under study. "Thus, the individual data elements are linked to maps to present the semantics related to the objects in the map, and to enhance the geographic information for further exploration, analysis, and presentation" (Alencar et al. 1997, p. 245).

"Cartographic hyperdocuments (in short hypermaps) are based on the hypertext techniques for automatic cartography. They allow the user to navigate between textual and cartographic information nodes in order to get a well-documented representation of the space" (Milleret-Raffort 1995, p. 197). In hypermaps the new types of objects are considered as targets defined in terms of semantic units thereby facilitating the creation of links such as map-to-map, map-to-image, image-to-map and map-to-text among others (Voisard 1998). The use of cartographic hypermaps is quintessential to improving DH projects that makes use of geospatial technologies. There has been a growing interest in utilizing geographic information systems (GIS) in the digital humanities and social sciences (DH). GIS-based DH projects usually emphasize spatial analysis and cartographic capability (e.g., displaying the locations of people, events, or movements), however, GIS alone cannot easily integrate multimedia components (e.g., descriptive text, photographs, digital audio, and video) of DH projects (Hu et al. 2018, p. 1).

Here hypermaps can serve as a platform to organise the multimedia components in a DH geo-spatial archive. With a single

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mouse click on the base map, the reader will be taken to other data related to the area under study (including other geographical maps and multimedia content). Hypermaps are therefore a georeferenced approach to hypermedia (Kraak and Driel 1997). It facilitate both thematic and spatial navigation within a geo-spatial archive (Milleret-Raffort 1995). It is important to note here that geo-spatial archives and spatial hypertexts differ from geographic-based searching (or spatial browsing) for scanned maps and documents such as the <u>BTAA geoportal</u>. While the latter facilitates geo-spatial search on a wide variety of topics and regions, the former is more focused on specific topics and places on which the spatial archive is cantered. For example, a spatial archive on Dalit massacres will primarily contain the location-based information on the massacre (in different forms of media) along with spatial hypertexts that allow the readers to navigate through the spatial information provided in the archive.

Milleret-Raffort (1995) identifies the two steps in the creation of hypermaps as: 1. the creation of content node (via word processor or existing graphics software) and 2. the creation of links (that facilitates navigation). Some basic functions of hypermaps as outlined by Kraak and Driel (1997, p. 460-61) are as follows: "access documents by spatial hypermap navigation (by clicking anywhere on the map); access documents by thematic hypermap navigation; access documents by temporal hypermap navigation (by adding a time-tag in addition to the usual geotag and attribute tag); apply filters in search and display; update the hypermap and storing hypermap data. Such functions are beneficial to the readers of a geo-spatial archive who might not get a clearer picture with document-based hypertextual links alone. Hypermaps therefore serve as "a browser of geographical information systems" (Kraak and Driel 1997, p. 463).

Hu et al., (2018) provide a methodology and steps for creating web-based multimedia mapping (or hypermaps) using Google Maps API and JavaScript libraries in the context of linguistics. Our study also involves the development of web-based hypermaps for the DH geo-spatial archive, which are published online. Geographical or cartographical hypermaps, as previously stated, refers to the use of maps as hyperdocument, i.e., on a mouse click, the reader will be directed to a cartographic map with detailed visualisation of the area of interest. Therefore, it is important to keep in mind that by the terms 'spatial hypertext' and 'hypermaps' we are referring to cartographic hypermaps throughout the chapter. A similar project is proposed by Norton (2023) for developing a "digital Ulysses project that applies hypertext/hypermedia, GIS, and wiki technology to provide users with easier access to all the materials necessary to contextualize the novel and add their own interpretations" (1). However, the project focuses more on developing a digital Ulysses that enable users to annotate hypertext/hypermedia in contrast to our project that focuses on using geographic maps as hypertext.

Hypermaps in a DH geo-spatial archive can be created in different ways, of which two important ones are: 1. Text-to-Map Hypermap in which maps are embedded as hyperlink to a text or description in the archive and 2. Map-to-Map Hypermap in which maps are embedded as hyperlink to a map that is already visualised in the archive. In the former a mouse click (or other interaction) will take the reader from a text or other multimedia to a geographical map whereas in the latter the transition is from one geographical map to another.

An example of a text-to-map hypermap is the *Grub Street Project* in which clicking on the spatial hypertexts in the 'Maps and

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Views of London' section will redirect the viewers to the respective maps as shown in figure 32 below.
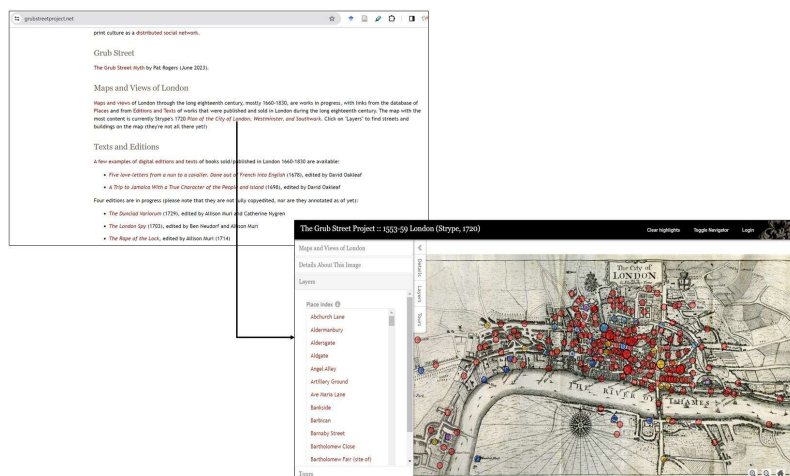
Figure 32: Screenshot of the Grub Street Project Showing the Text-to-map Hypermap

Map-to-Map Hypermaps are relatively newer. One example is *Army Barracks of Eighteenth-Century Ireland* in which clicking on the interactive points on the main map will take the readers to a detailed map of the selected location as shown in the figure 33 below. In the below example the map on Dunshaughlin is the hypermap.
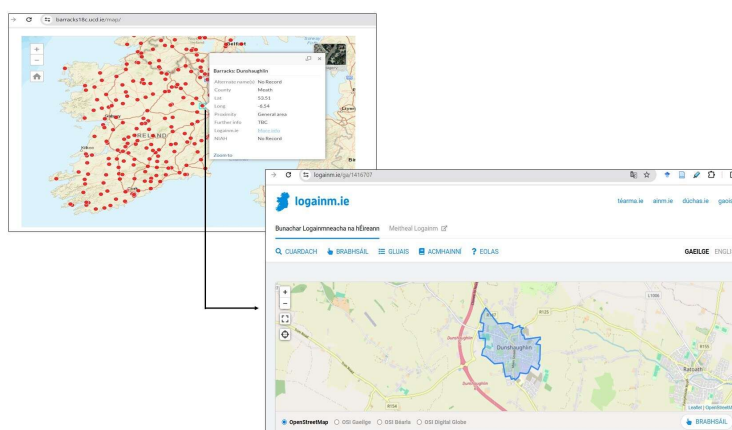

Figure 33: Screenshot of the *Army Barracks of Eighteenth-Century Ireland* Project Showing Map-to-map Hypermap

Hypermap creation is facilitated by most GIS software and applications. A simple example of interlinked geographical hypermap system is wikimaps. "Wikimaps visualise the evolution of links over time between wikipedia articles in different subject areas" (Kleeb et al. 2012, p. 204). The geographical relation between the articles is mapped on google maps from which the readers can access and trace the links between their topic of interest. However, the links on the map does not directly take the readers to a hyperlinked cartographic map but to an article from which the reader can again access the map of the area of interest. Thus, wikimaps doesn't follow the direct hypermap system that we are proposing in this article, but it can be seen as an initial attempt to create a spatial archive with hypermaps. The process of exploring the visualisation in wikimaps is shown in figure 34 below.
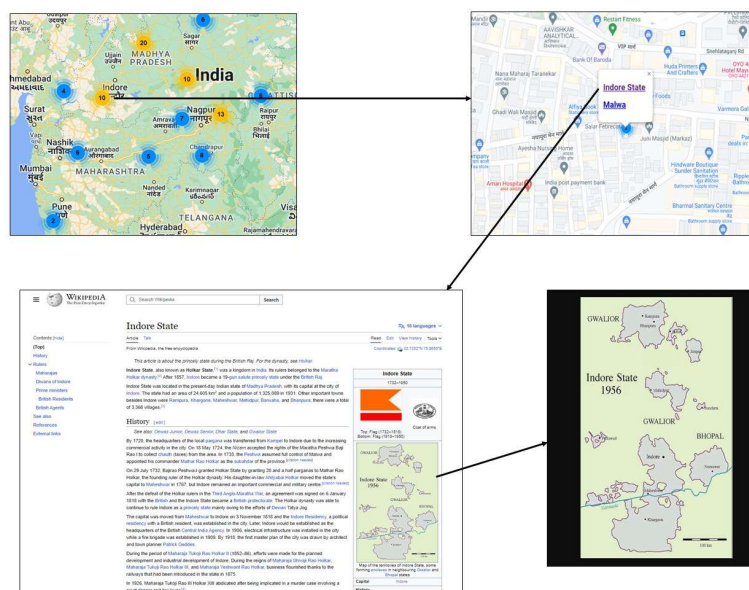

Figure 34: Screenshot of the Wikipedia Entries on the City of Indore Showing the Geographical Hypermap. From top left to right: The first image is a screenshot of the Wikipedia entries on the city of Indore and nearby places. On clicking Indore, the second screenshot shown comes up which is a detailed map of Indore with two options: Indore State and Malwa. Upon clicking on the Indore state option, the reader is

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taken to the third image/screenshot which is the Wikipedia article on Indore. This page also has a map on the city of Indore which when clicked leads to the fourth image of a 1956 map of Indore

In the spatial archive, we use a combination of map-to-map and text-to-map hypermaps in the archive, though the former will be given priority as the aim is to create a spatial archive. The main map or the base map of the spatial archive features selected Dalit massacres in post-independent India (figure 35a). Each massacre (represented as a point on the map) is geocoded and hyperlinked with the data collected from various literary and non-literary sources. Here the data is geocoded using latitudinal and longitudinal values. A completed hypermap on a massacre contains "thematic layers, or thematic maps, where each layer is a collection of geographic or geologic objects" (Voisard 1998, p. 15). The data on the massacre is thematically mapped into different layers such as historical representation, fictional characters, refugee camps and feminist organisations among others. There is also an option to hide layers in the hypermap of a massacre so that the readers can analyse the layers according to their specific needs. These thematic layers are further geocoded or geotagged with other forms of media like text, images and videos if any.

Using maps as hypertext or hypermaps in a geospatial archive has the following benefits:

1. *The hypermaps while offering interactivity to the users, also facilitates horizontal and vertical forms of reading and analysis.*
   In the prototype, the readers will be able to navigate and analyse the data of different massacres as well as within the data within a specific massacre through the different hypermap links available in the spatial archive.

2. *Hypermaps are efficient in structuring and navigating a georeferenced hypermedia database* (Kraak and Driel 1997, p. 463).

   The users of the spatial archive will be able to easily navigate the georeferenced hypermedia including pictures of the female survivors and monuments on the site of massacre, oral narratives from the survivors incorporated as voice notes and other forms of media by interacting with the hypermaps.

3. *Hypermaps contributes to new understandings of the relationship between space and the topic under study.*

   In the prototype stated above, it enables the readers to understand the relation between caste and gender in the Marichjhapi massacre.

4. *Use of hypermaps result in the creation of a geospatially informed Digital Humanities, with geo-tagged spatial connections which in turn help with designing spatial research in DH* (Foley and Murphy 2015).

   The spatial archive that we are creating will serve as a prototype for similar geospatially informed Digital Humanities projects.

5. *The flexibility of spatial hypertext supports volatility and change* (Shipman and Marshall 1995, p. 91*) thereby making it easier to alter and update the data as per requirement.*

   The spatial archive that we are proposing will need to be constantly updated as and when more data is available, and the use of spatial hypertext will facilitate this.

6. *Spatial hypertexts or hypermaps can also be used in website of libraries, archives and museums.*

   This will result in increased access to historical documents that can be read and analyzed in a non-linear manner.

5.3.3 From Concept to Creation: Approaches, Techniques and Workflow in Creating a Spatial Archive

We initially tried using Google My Maps but faced difficulties in customising the spatial hypertexts and in implementing advanced spatial features like georeferencing historical maps. On a similar note, QGIS is also not a feasible option for creating, editing and embedding online/web maps into a website though the software is suitable for creating static map images and geospatial analysis. Organisational access of ArcGIS Pro and ArcGIS Online was not available at the early stages of the project which restricted us to the free versions. However, the free versions do not facilitate creation and sharing of hypermaps using Arcgis API (Application Programming Interface) key in a customizable manner as required for the archive. We had to migrate the maps from the free personal account to organisation account for creating sharable and open-access online maps. The current maps in the archive are created using ArcGIS Pro and shared using ArcGIS Online (license provided together by IITI and Jaya Prakash Narayan (JPN) National Centre of Excellence in the Humanities at IITI).

OSM is employed as the base map for the integration of the spatial hypertexts or cartographic map-to-map hypermaps of each massacre. Since the main authors of the project are not acquainted with advanced coding, we used minimal computing by relying on existing sources and libraries. The source code for the base map that is embedded as the spatial archive in the website is obtained from ArcGIS Maps SDK (Software Development Kit) for JavaScript. The base map code is further edited with Notepad++, to create the index.html web page which in turn is connected with an ArcGIS account specific API key (here provided by the home institute) that helps in loading the map into the ArcGIS Online platform. The tags in

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HTML are defined based upon the project-specific requirements. Each massacre, Kilvenmani and Marichjhapi in this case, is mapped in ArcGIS Online with multiple layers on the real, fictional, mythical female survivors and other related data. This web map is later published as Instant Apps in ArcGIS Online. The URLs to each of these apps are added to the basemap .csv file and mapped as a featured layer (hosted) in ArcGIS Online. This renders each massacre point as "a content node" (Milleret-Raffort 1995) on the base map, as the URLs are directly linked as spatial hypertexts to the map. Currently only the Kilvenmani and the Marichjhapi massacres are hyperlinked and the map that opens upon clicking Marichjhapi in shown in figure 35 (b). This workflow will be further refined, updated and made available as a GitHub repository on the website. The final base map with interactive spatial hypertexts is embedded on the project website (figure 35a).


35(a)

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35(b)
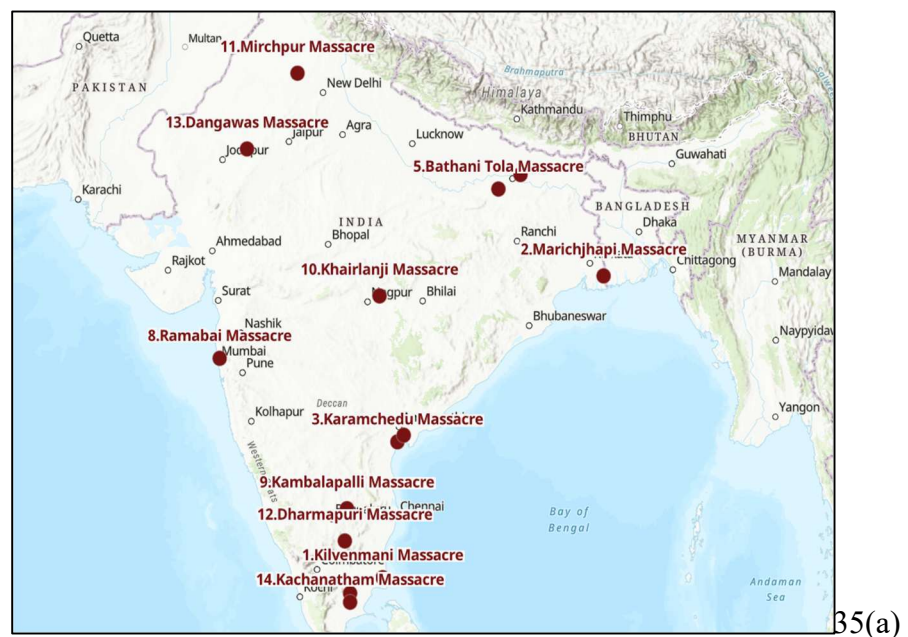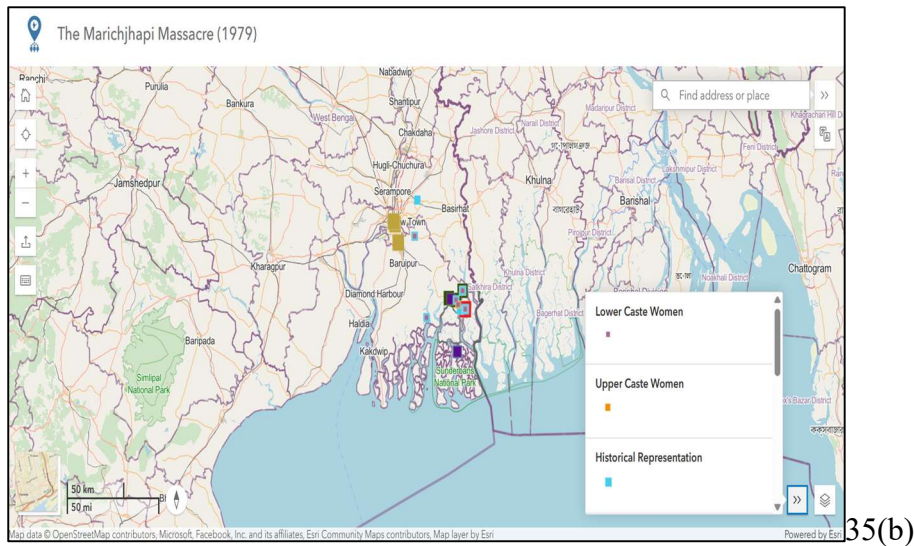
Figure 35: (a) Screenshot of the Base Map of the Spatial Archive; (b) Upon Clicking on the Marichjhapi Massacre, the Users are Taken to a Deep Map of the Female Survivors of the Massacre

Workflow
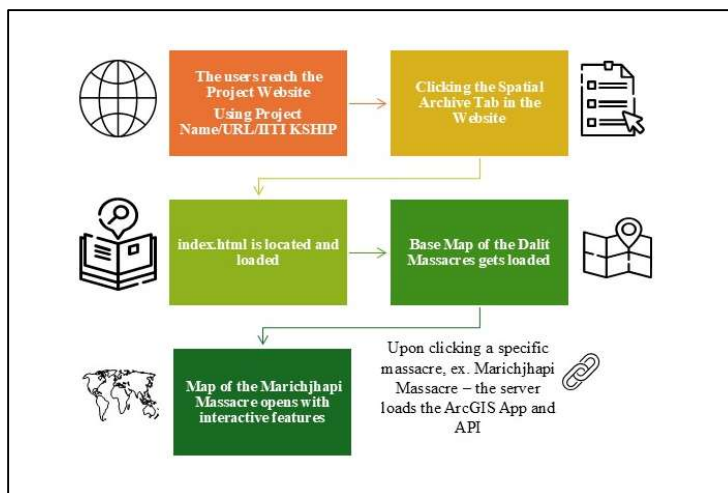
Figure 36: Representation of the Workflow Behind Accessing the Archive

The workflow begins when the user initiates a request to access the project website either via direct search (using the name of the project or the URL https://mappingmassacres.iiti.ac.in/) or through

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IITI KSHIP portal. Upon reaching the project website the user can navigate to the page on the spatial archive. The server locates and loads the index.html that is embedded within the spatial archive page of the website. The users can then interact with the base map of the main Dalit massacres in India or access each massacre specific data of the female survivors. Clicking on the massacre points loads the ArcGIS Online Instant Apps created on the selected massacre including the ArcGIS API. The user can see the interactive map on the specific massacre with interactive layers (there is option to turn the layers on and off), search option as well as capture screenshots of the map at different scales/sizes.

5.4 Challenges, Opportunities, and Insights – What We Have Learnt

The process of creating a geospatial archive in DH has been a turbulent ride with no advanced technological skills and human resources. We had to follow basic or minimal computing principles and learn through trial and error. This section outlines the possibilities and tensions that we encountered from inception to the current stage of the project.

5.4.1 Possibilities

1. *Geospatial archiving in DH offers an innovative way to create awareness about the marginalised histories in India.*
   The creation of *Cartographies of Courage: Fictional Threads, Real Lives* as an open-source geospatial archive enabled us to reclaim, preserve and foreground the marginalized histories of the female survivors of Dalit massacres which are overlooked in mainstream textbooks and narratives. The multidisciplinary archive serves as an educational resource on Dalit massacres

that can be easily incorporated into curriculums that center around spatial humanities, Dalit studies and DH.

2. *The archive serves as an example for leveraging technology to address issues that are culturally specific.*

The archive serves as a prototype for future feminist GIS projects in India by providing the first database and spatial archive on female survivors of Dalit massacres. It serves as an example for using technology to address culturally specific issues like caste-based human rights violations and the importance of social justice in this case.

3. *Comprehensive geospatial archive can result in informed policy making and societal reforms.*

The textual and spatial data derived from multiple sources along with the feminist and geocritical readings can result in informed policy making that can eradicate the space, gender and caste relations in Dalit massacres that results in the triple marginalisation of Dalit women. Increased visibility to Dalit issues can also result in social, economic and cultural changes that can improve the conditions of Dalit in the country.

4. *The results of deep spatial analysis of the massacres can be extrapolated to the other massacres in the country as caste remains a common practice in India.*

The hyperlinked deep maps provided in the archive enables the users to see the similarities and the differences in the occurrence of caste-based Dalit massacres in India.

> The idea of interpolation remains important here. Just as the literary critic uses partial clues (from letters, diaries, drafts), or the historian pieces together snippets of information from similar archival sources, in order to tell a story, that story usually contains gaps. The capacity to fill those gaps and meaningfully estimate the 'spaces' in

between is the business of interpolation, a common spatial modelling method used in GIS (Foley and Murphy 2015).

5. *Digital geospatial archiving increases the visibility of Dalit issues and enables the users to understand the space, caste and gender relations of Indian Dalit massacres.*

   Digital open-access presence of the archive increases national and international solidarity to the issues of marginalised communities – Dalits in this case – thereby serving advocatory functions. The use of spatial data and mapping enables the users to contextualise, identify and eliminate caste and gender-based spatial segregation in India.

6. *Collaboration, acquisition of new knowledge, and resilience.*

   The process of creating DH projects requires collaboration, an openness to learn new knowledge systems, techniques and practices. The process of creating a geospatial archive is no different as it results in teamwork, learning and devising new techniques (spatial hypertexts in this context) and resilience as the researchers learn from their mistakes which are recorded for the future generations to avoid.

5.4.2 Tensions

1. *Geospatial archive with advanced features requires institutional funding and infrastructural support.*

   "It is technically difficult [to create a geospatial archive], and the hardware and software requirements can be expensive, despite an increasing FOSS (free or open-source software) environment for both digital maps and spatial data" (Foley and Murphy 2015). We have tried working with free and open-source technologies and tools but were not able to fulfil the requirements, aims and objectives of the project due to the minimal features offered by them and sustainability issues

(previously stated in the approaches section of this chapter). Creation of independent projects will therefore be difficult as the infrastructure required to create, host, disseminate, and sustain such projects is expensive. This project was made possible because of the organisational access received from the home institute (IITI) as well as external funding (CLS INFRA TNA fellowship).

2. *Creation of geospatial archives is time-consuming and requires advanced skills if the project involves innovative techniques.*
   Foley and Murphy (2015) notes in this regard,

   > In the first place, learning to use a tool such as ArcGIS or QGIS can be a time-consuming process and, if it is to accurately and precisely reflect spatial locations, requires at least a basic understanding of some geographic and cartographic concepts such as projections, coordinate systems, and generalization.

   It is also important to consider the "documentation, metadata, and long-term stability to ensure that the final product was accessible by future users" (Hooper et al. 2020). The time required for the creation and sustenance of the project can be very limited especially in the case of doctoral projects as in this case. Acquiring the required skills can also be hectic for a traditional humanities scholar as the person will have to navigate through server issues, dealing with third party software, finding collaborators, together with learning especially in case of less human resources.

3. *Managing sensitive geospatial data requires careful attention.*
   Ethical concerns arise while dealing with sensitive geospatial data of survivors of traumatic events and devising sensitive documentation strategies is difficult. The archive comes with a

trigger warning to caution the users of the website and anonymisation of the survivors is another strategy used. However, some of the mapped information is available in the public domain (like in newspaper reports) and presenting the data in an ethical way becomes even more challenging.

4. *Accessibility and trust issues while attempting to collect survivor accounts.*

   Efforts to carry out fieldwork for this project faced challenges, as finding the survivors and earning their trust proved difficult, given that the project focuses on sensitive issues such as caste and spatial discrimination. Attempts to recruit translators and insiders from the areas also proved unsuccessful and the survivors were not open to talking to researchers who did not belong to their caste and spatial location. In addition to this, talking about caste and related issues is still risky in rural India.

Lessons from the Project

Over the course of the project we realised that digital mapping is both a method and a tool (Jankowska 2021). The project demanded advanced training in geospatial software – QGIS, ArcGIS Pro and ArcGIS Online. This was mostly acquired through attending workshops, watching online video tutorials and other online resources. The difficulties that we faced motivated us to curate a list of online and offline resources on digital mapping which will be later made available through the archive. We were not able to find similar projects in Indian context due to which we have recorded every step and decisions that we have made during the project that might prove useful for similar research in future. Such reproducible workflows, ethical concerns and sustainability issues are also made publicly available through the spatial archive. We are also opening the archive to crowdsourcing as we faced difficulties in conducting fieldwork. There will be an option

for users to submit data on the massacres through forms which will later be cross-checked and incorporated with due acknowledgement.

We believe that collaboration, crowdsourcing, inclusion of diverse data, and legal associations can help with overcoming the challenges and to fulfil our larger goals to recognise the memories of the massacres and its survivors in future.

> In other words, the importance of massacres is not limited to a brutal act located in a specific time and place but has wider repercussions for both the culture that suffered the crime and the culture that committed it. A decolonized map provides a platform for both recording what happened and also recording the reflex to what happened down through the generations (Hooper et al. 2020).

The outcome of the project has been a collection of spatial data derived from multiple sources on the female survivors of the massacre (real and fictional) and a geocoded spatial dataset that can be used by the researchers across disciplines to further explore the space, caste and gender relations in Dalit massacres. As, "the digital archive is comprised of artifacts but is in itself an artifact, a creatively curated representation of representations" (Bernardi 2017). This digitally borne project also serves as a platform to archive the diverse forms of data on selected Dalit massacres that is both open-access and reproducible. To quote Foley and Murphy (2015),

> Though this is not yet "deep mapping" as envisaged by Bodenhamer, the project draws together sources from multiple archives into one place and represents at least some of the forces that are at play in a given location and a given point in time.

5.5 Conclusion

Spatial archiving is an important part of DH projects with an increasing number of novel projects coming up each year across the world. "A number of Digital Humanities projects involve some interaction with geographic data. Many of these projects involve attempts to address historical questions by applying GIS or digital mapping tools" (Stokes 2013, p. 15). Though there are a number of DH geo-spatial archival projects, the existing projects fails to identify as a spatial archive. Geo-spatial archives in DH are mostly website-based projects that seek to document, represent, and communicate histories of a discrete social space using GIS and are populated with multimedia content managed in relational databases (Stokes 2013). In this chapter we have attempted to define and understand the concept of geo-spatial archives from a Digital Humanities perspective. The chapter conducted a thorough literature review to explore the various types and characteristics of geospatial archives, ultimately proposing and applying the use of hypermaps or spatial hypertext within these archives to improve the representation of space. Thus, the chapter aims to capture the attention of the spatial digital humanists to the developing field of spatial archives and to initiate discussions on the possibilities of the same through the proposal of digital maps as spatial hypertexts. This chapter contributes to DH, geospatial and Dalit scholarship in the subcontinent by presenting innovative methods for sharing research that engage both academic communities and the public.

Cartographies of Courage: Fictional Threads, Real Lives is used as a prototype project to briefly explore the possibility of using spatial hypertexts in geo-spatial archive. The theoretical precincts of the spatial archives in DH are discussed before proceeding to discuss the conception, curation, design, and development of this project. The project is then explored in detail from its inception to the current stage by focusing on the methodologies, tools and techniques that are used in

the creation of the project website and the spatial archive. We have also touched upon the ethical, reproducibility and sustainability concerns in the project website. The possibilities and challenges that the project encountered together with our lessons from the project are documented in the chapter to serve as a guide for the future researchers to avoid possible pitfalls while creating a similar project. The theoretical and methodological frameworks used in the creation, curation, analysis and proliferation of the project will serve as a prototype for future feminist GIS projects especially from India. "A key benefit of a GIS approach is that it enables the researcher to identify spatial patterns within data which may otherwise be unapparent" (Foley and Murphy 2015). We believe the project will empower its users to ask questions and identify patterns that may have escaped our attention thereby reaffirming Bernardi's (2017) argument that digital archives are a form of critical scholarship. By adopting interdisciplinary methodologies, addressing ethical considerations, and embracing emerging technologies, we can harness the power of spatial archives to preserve, interpret, and share the history of Dalit massacres for future generations.

Limitations and Future Scope: The spatial archive currently offers deep maps of only the Kilvenmani and the Marichjhapi massacres but will be further expanded in future to include the other prominent massacres of each decade after independence. The data used for mapping is restricted to English sources which will be expanded to include multilingual sources. We also plan to explore advanced mapping options that can facilitate deeper analysis of the massacres. We believe studies like this can be integrated with emerging geospatial technologies to promote innovative collaboration between Humanities and GIS researchers. The spatial archive, research outputs and the project website will be further disseminated through social media platforms (like X/Twitter). Further crowdsourcing for data and

materials will be attempted by creating critical readings groups and inviting blogs pieces related to the themes of the project.

We believe that the spatial archive created has the potential to serve as infrastructure in itself by facilitating and hosting similar studies in future on the website. The website is consciously titled as *Cartographies of Courage: Fictional Threads, Real Lives* keeping this future scope to institutionalise and amplify related marginalised histories. The initial aim of the project was only to create an archive or a digital memorial that can reignite the forgotten past of the Dalit massacres in the country and to offer a platform to record the narratives of the female survivors. As the project progressed, we recognized its potential impact on education, legislation, and policymaking, given the lack of theoretical, pedagogical, and legal frameworks on Dalit massacres in India. The next chapter therefore proposes a legal framework for tackling Dalit massacres in India.

Chapter 6

Proposal of a Legal and Theoretical Framework for Dalit Massacres and Conclusion

Our outrage is not enough. We must take real and focused action to mend our societies' dramatic failure to support the rights of people of discriminated castes, particularly women and girls.

- Navi Pillay, former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

The chapter is divided into two sections – the first section revisits the theoretical framework proposed for the study of Dalit massacres in India and expands upon it to propose a legal framework. The second section is the concluding section of the thesis as it looks at the main research findings of the core chapters, limitations of this study and the scope for further research.

Section I: Proposal of a Legal and Theoretical Framework for Dalit Massacres

The theoretical frameworks for understanding and analysing Dalit massacres are discussed in the earlier chapters of the thesis. To summarise, the introductory chapter of the thesis traces the theoretical frameworks for understanding Dalit massacres in India by tracing the meanings of the term 'Dalit', theorisations on the relations among space, caste and gender in Dalit scholarship, to contextualising Dalit massacres using Dalit activism, Dalit literature and Dalit theory. After classifying Dalit massacres and differentiating between Dalit atrocities and massacres, the chapter also offers a theoretical framework that is a combination of feminist geocriticism and digital cartography to understand the space, caste and gender relations in Dalit massacres. The main chapters of the thesis – second and third chapters respectively applies this methodology. The introductory chapter also identifies the three phases of the massacre (Semelin 2002; 2003) and

the absence of a legal definition of Dalit massacres. The fourth chapter proposes and applies a theoretical framework for the comparison of two or more Dalit massacres using comparative historical, cultural and literary approaches.

The next section further expands the theoretical framework and presents a legal framework for Dalit massacres in India, while addressing the lack of existing laws. This is accomplished through identifying the gaps in massacre studies from existing literature and by building upon the works and thoughts of the stalwarts in massacre studies as well as Dalit studies (as elaborated in Chapter 1). The chapter aims to be a steppingstone in initiating dialogues on formulating a legal framework, given the fact that the current Indian legal system does not address the same. We do not claim that the chapter is self-sufficient to address all the issues in the field but needs further discussions and brainstorming on massacres, especially Dalit massacres, from both academics and policy makers across the globe.

6.1 Further Expansion of the Theoretical Framework

Having defined Dalit massacres and analysing the reasons behind the it, we now move on to categorize and characterize the phenomenon of Dalit massacres. While trying to frame a theoretical and legal framework for Dalit massacres it is important to understand the factors that led to the massacre which is achieved by classifying Dalit massacres. However, the classification of massacres is another challenging task as the nature and context of each massacre render them unique and subjective. Massacre, a form of mass killing (Mullen 2004 as cited in Bowers et al. 2010), can be initiated 'by the state directly' and 'by individuals outside the state (with the implicit support of the state)' (Dwyer and Ryan 2013). Massacres are further classified into fractal massacre (Dwyer and Ryan 2013), structural and functional massacres (Semelin 2003), administrative massacre (Osiel 1995),

political and genocidal massacres, local and long-range massacres, bilateral and unilateral massacres, mass massacres and small-scale mass massacres, close-up massacre (Dwyer 2012), hot-blooded killing, and cold-blooded killing (Inga Jones as cited in, Dwyer and Ryan 2012). Within the larger category of massacres, Dalit massacres however, fall in the category of autogenic massacres, where 'the killing is being generated primarily out of the perpetrator's own problems and personal attitudes' (Bowers et al. 2010) which in the case of Dalit massacres is caste.

Dalit massacres across the country are initiated either by the state directly (as in the Marichjhapi massacre) or by the upper caste, with or without the support of the state, and are often genocidal in nature (as often the intention is to eradicate a particular Dalit group entirely from the places that they occupy by arson). Therefore, one way to classify Dalit massacre is based on the perpetrators of the massacre as — state-initiated or state-supported Dalit massacre, Dalit massacre by upper caste and sub-caste massacres (by the lower caste). The state-initiated or state-supported Dalit massacres are much more difficult to address legally as the evidence for the same is often intangible and tampered. However, classifying Dalit massacres based on the number of deaths is unjustifiable as: first even one caste-based Dalit killing should be considered a massacre and second the number of deaths in Dalit massacres are often ambiguous or manipulated and, in some cases, even the occurrence of the massacre is denied by the state (example Marichjhapi massacre).

Five key areas on which mass murders are based on, which is also applicable to Dalit massacres are: 'location, victim characteristics, motive, weapon, and end result' (Bowers et al. 2010). Dalit massacres in India are often named after the village or the location of the violence. Location is also significant in Dalit massacres as Dalits are

often segregated and pushed to the outskirts of the village into colonies or 'cheris' (Ambedkar 1935) based on their caste. This caste-based spatial segregation renders the Dalits more vulnerable to violence and mass murder. The victims are often characteristically discriminated based on their position in the caste hierarchy. Therefore, the motive of most Dalit massacres is to instil fear in the Dalits and to silence their attempts to organize and resist caste-based oppression. In most Dalit massacres the weapon used is fire, that is, arson, which destroys the land, cattle, and people alike thereby reducing the chances of recovery to their former situation.

Frigole (2008) identifies that 'the "theory" or ideology from which massacre is designed, the type of authority that perpetrates it and the basis of its power, and the transnational context' are some of the factors that affect massacres and its intensity. Both the local and international parameters, third parties and their compliance (Semelin 2003) also play a significant role in massacres, of which the third party in the case of Dalit massacres are often the State. Identity—religious, national, political or other cultural identity—and the notion of purity are some other factors that determine the type and effect of a massacre. 'The destruction of the "them" would be the constitutive "proof" of the "we". So, to kill is not only to purify, but also to be purified. It is from this that the language of purification or of cleansing stems, which in turn is borrowed from religion (ritual purification), war (clearing the ground), and medicine (eliminating the germs)' (Semelin 2003). This concept of purification is applicable to the Dalit massacres, as the notion of caste is based on purity which renders the Dalits untouchables or impure, who cannot even be considered as humans.

6.2 Proposal of a Legal Framework

When it comes to the Dalits in India, there are a few laws that aim to protect their minority rights (Art. 30, The Constitution of India)

as well as to prevent atrocities against them (India: Act No. 33 of 1989). However, such laws are incapable of dealing with grave acts of violence like massacres. As mentioned previously, the existing prominent law against Dalit violence is the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes Prevention of Atrocities, (POA) Act, 1989 (India: Act No. 33 of 1989). Some of the provisions in the act can be effectively adopted for the Dalit massacres as well. The *Chapter IV, Section 14, Special Court and Exclusive Special Court*; *Chapter IV A, Section 15A, Rights of Victims and Witnesses* and *Section 18 A, No enquiry or approval required*, *Section 21, Duty of Government to Ensure Effective Implementation of the Act* are some of the sections that are feasible for Dalit massacre laws. Though, the law is effective in controlling the physical and mental atrocities against Dalits, it does not cover the instances of massacre or mass killing. The instances of threat to the life and property of Dalits that are mentioned in the law are points (iii) and (iv) of sub-section 2 in *Section 3 of Chapter II*. This is given below:

> (iii) commits mischief by fire or any explosive substance intending to cause or knowing it to be likely that he will thereby cause damage to any property belonging to a member of a Scheduled Caste or a Scheduled Tribe, shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term which shall not be less than six months but which may extend to seven years and with fine; (iv) commits mischief by fire or any explosive substance intending to cause or knowing it to be likely that he will thereby cause destruction of any building which is ordinarily used as a place of worship or as a place for human dwelling or as a place for custody of the property by a member of a Scheduled Caste or a Scheduled Tribe, shall be punishable with imprisonment for life and with fine.

Therefore, it is important to propose an additional law that caters to the causalities that occur as an aftermath to Dalit massacres.

The process of framing a unified law for Dalit massacres in India is difficult as each massacre is subjective and is characterized by specific motives. The factors behind the massacre as well as the cultural context in which the massacre takes place also differs. The absence of an international legal framework for convicting the perpetrators of massacre makes this process even more difficult. The only existing model which could be adopted are the laws put forward by the 'Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide' by the United Nations Human Rights ('Convention', 1951). In this article, therefore, we take important insights from both the convention and the POA Act 1989 (with all its amendments), to propose the framework for criminalizing Dalit massacres.

Before proceeding to the proposal of the actual legal and theoretical framework, it is important to outline the components of the Dalit massacre that are to be considered punishable. The incidents preceding (that led to the massacre), during and succeeding the massacre that have an adverse effect on the mental and physical well-being of the Dalit survivors should be punished and compensated by law. Special emphasis and consideration should be given to the vulnerable sections within the Dalit communities such as women, children and those belonging to sub-castes while criminalizing Dalit massacres. Often in massacres, the sole focus shifts to the number of deaths, thereby ignoring other casualties of the massacre such as rape and other sexual violence. Therefore, it is important to consider and compensate for such victims or survivors as well, by binding the state to approach and converse with them and encourage them to report the crimes that were committed against them.

Rather than taking a one-sided approach, it is more effective to listen to the narratives from both the perpetrator and the victim-survivors so that the initial issue of conflict that led to the massacre is resolved by the state as part of ensuring legal justice. Rectification of the cause will help to control and prevent similar massacres in future, at least in the same place. Finally, but most importantly, identifying the silent parties in compliance with the perpetrators is also important as most of the time they facilitate the massacre and Proper punishment should be given irrespective of their power position—the state, upper caste landlords, etc. Therefore, laws that criminalize Dalit massacres should not only aim to ensure justice and compensation to the victims at all levels but also rectify the situations that led to the massacre to avert future violence.

Before moving forward with the proposal, it is crucial to revisit the definition of a Dalit massacre as outlined in Chapter 1. In this study Dalit massacre is broadly defined as an organized process of caste-based destruction that led 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 the Dalits. Also note that in the upcoming sections, 'Victim' has the same meaning as in the POA Act (India: Act No. 33 of 1989), that is, 'any individual who falls within the definition of the "Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes" under' clause (24) and clause (25) of article 366 of the Constitution of India (1950), 'and who has suffered or experienced physical, mental, psychological, emotional or monetary harm or harm to his (or her) property as a result of the commission of any offence under this Act and includes his (or her) relatives, legal guardian and legal heirs'. Therefore, the following acts against the Dalit categories—the SC and ST categories in which 'Scheduled Castes' shall have the meaning assigned to it in clause (24) of Article 366 of the Constitution of India and 'Scheduled Tribes' shall have the

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meaning assigned to it in clause (25) of Article 366 of the Constitution of India—are condemned and are punishable by law which extends to the whole of India,

1. Killing members belonging to the Dalit community
2. Causing mental or physical harm to the members of the Dalit community
3. Being silent accomplice to the massacre
4. Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group
5. Incite, conspire, or attempt to commit Dalit massacres

The following measures should be taken and enforced in case of the occurrence of Dalit massacre:

1. The state should constitute a committee of five or more members, including at least one Dalit member and a woman, to understand the scenario before, during and after the massacre.

2. The vulnerable sections of the survivors like women, children and the sub-castes should be identified, and their narratives should be considered while compiling a report on the massacre.

3. Survivors should be encouraged to report rape or any other instances of sexual and physical assault that were committed as part of the massacre.

4. Survivors belonging to both the perpetrator and the victim side should be consulted to understand the underlying reasons that led to the massacre and the report should include possible ways to address the same.

5. The committee report should effectively outline the measures for the relief and rehabilitation of all the victims and the 'dependents' (India: Act No. 33 of 1989) of the victims, of the Dalit massacre and its allied cases.

6. The report by the committee will serve as a legal record of the massacre. Therefore, all attempts to create a comprehensive record including the number of deaths and other allied cases should be undertaken.

In accordance with the genocide convention's law, it is important to include an article within the law stating that the 'persons committing Dalit massacres or any of the other acts enumerated above shall be punished, whether they are constitutionally responsible rulers, public officials or private individuals'. The persons accused as perpetrators of Dalit massacres should be tried by a special court and exclusive special courts, constituted by the State Government with the concurrence of the Chief Justice of the High Court (India: Act No. 33 of 1989), comprising experienced judges not less than District or Additional-District level, for speedy trial and delivery of justice to the victims. The cases allied to the massacre, including sexual assault and rape should be tried in the same court. 'It shall be the duty of the State Government to establish adequate number of Courts to ensure that cases under this Act are disposed of within a period of two months, as far as possible' (India: Act No. 33 of 1989).

6.3.3 Conclusions of Section I

This proposal is a humble attempt to look at Dalit massacres from a broader perspective to understand the gaps in the field and to propose a suitable legal and theoretical framework for Dalit massacres in India. We encountered several hurdles while attempting to accomplish this—from the absence of a general definition to the absence of official records on Dalit massacres in India (especially when the state denies the occurrence of the massacres). In this section of the chapter, we have attempted to define Dalit massacre, to classify the massacres and to identify some of the causal factors. However, we acknowledge that the proposal and definitions are a work in progress

and aims to initiate dialogues towards drafting an effective legal framework. We also reiterate the need to maintain legal and/or administrative records and documentation of Dalit massacres. A critical analysis of such records can help us to trace the patterns in Dalit massacres thereby helping to amend the laws for the same. It is also important to develop and establish a vocabulary of Dalit massacres to facilitate proper justice. In most cases, the culprits have been acquitted for lack of evidence, absence of records of rape victims. Justice in the form of compensation, prevention and protection were hence denied to them. Semelin (2003) refers to understanding massacres and its elements as a 'dark hole' and that 'the social sciences could provide a better analysis of the nature of this black hole and could surely even estimate its elementary structure. But an unknown dimension shall always remain: an implacable zone of darkness'. It is time that we begin to address this dark hole pertaining to Dalit massacres and to understand at least some parts of it, if not completely.

Section II: Conclusion

This thesis lies at the crossroads of Dalit studies and literature; feminist geography and geocriticism; digital cartography and feminist GIS; and spatial and digital humanities. The broader focus of the thesis resides within the intersection of Dalit studies and digital humanities, drawing primarily from current scholarly debates in Dalit theory, feminist geocriticism, and feminist GIS. Consequently, this thesis demonstrates the capacity of digital tools and platforms to foreground the histories of marginalised communities, Dalits in this case, thereby facilitating informed policy development, legal interventions and further research. The interdisciplinary multimodal geo-centric approach consisting of a comprehensive digital mapping and literary analysis of fictional and non-fictional female narratives of the massacres, fills the gap in current scholarship and research on Dalit

massacres in India. The study for the first time in India, contributes to understanding the intersectional relations among space, caste and gender that operate in Dalit massacres as the existing scholarship deals either only with caste and gender or caste and space. This thesis contributes also to the current Dalit scholarship in India by proposing comparative, legal, theoretical and pedagogical frameworks for understanding female experiences of Dalit massacres in India. This will catalyse discussions and debates regarding the frequently forgotten history of caste-based massacres and launch state/public efforts to curb further violence against Dalits. The study contributes to the digital humanities endeavours in India by developing an open-access spatial archive that can serve as a prototype for future Indian feminist GIS projects. Through an extensive review and exploration of existing literature on Dalits, the thesis identifies gaps in the understanding of Dalit massacres and proposes a mixed-methodology approach for analysing Dalit female narratives.

The three core chapters of the thesis (chapters 2, 3 and 4) apply a mixed methodology of feminist geocriticism (qualitative) and digital cartography (quantitative, here GIS/Geographic Information Systems) to visualise and investigate the relations among space, caste, and gender in Dalit massacres in India. For this, the female survivors and their experiences are identified from both fictional and non-fictional narratives (in different formats and medium) through comprehensive case studies, including the Kilvenmani massacre (1968) and the Marichjhapi massacre (1979), each of which are studied separately and in comparison. The research analyses the patterns, narrative techniques, depictions of female characters/survivors/activists and authors among others in the fictional and non-fictional narratives to foreground the space, caste and gender relations in the selected massacres. The narratives selected for analysis have received limited scholarly attention regarding Dalit massacres. The texts are therefore

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analysed individually and in comparison, to gain a deeper understanding of the representations of the Dalit female lived experiences before, during and after the massacres in the narratives. Through this, the thesis emphasizes the potential of both fictional and non-fictional texts in shedding light on the histories of 'doubly marginalized' communities like the Dalit females.

The causal factors of the massacres, events during and after the massacre, and narratives are also analysed using comparative historical, cultural and literary methods in chapter 4 to further ground the findings earlier obtained using feminist geocriticism and digital cartography. The aggregate study confirms the hypothesis of an inherent relation among space, caste and gender in Dalit massacres in India. The case studies demonstrates that the caste identity determines the spatial location of the female survivors which renders them susceptible to gender and caste-based violence during the massacres. The findings also indicate that space should be considered as an intersectional category while trying to understand the socio-cultural identity and experiences of Dalit women. The thesis further investigates the challenges and possibilities in developing an open-access interactive spatial archive of the female survivors in Chapter 5. The chapter also proposes and applies a methodology for incorporating spatial hypertexts or hypermaps into geospatial archives within DH. Chapter 6 expands the theoretical framework introduced in Chapter 1 while also proposing a legal framework for Dalit massacres in India.

"Digital humanities investigate how digital formats and tools are changing the way we share knowledge in the humanities" (Posner 2017). DH methodologies are yet to be applied to marginalized literatures and theories in India, and this study servers a precursor for similar future research. By combining literature with DH, the thesis provides visibility to the female survivors of Dalit massacres and

directs the state and public attention to their afterlives including rehabilitation and justice. The integration of GIS and spatial methodologies facilitates the identification of patterns in caste, space and gender relations that may remain obscured when relying solely on traditional humanities analysis. This study combines traditional literary theory with digital humanities tools and techniques to illustrate the potential of digital storytelling in 1.) amplifying the voices of survivors and 2.) in promoting both national and international solidarity through open-access digital platforms. Open-access archiving, along with documenting the successes and setbacks in data acquisition and archive creation, and establishing a reproducible and sustainable workflow, will act as a reference for future research.

6.4 Key Findings and Contributions of the Thesis

The main research findings and contributions of this thesis are as follows:

1. This thesis addresses the previously unexplored relations among space, caste and gender in Dalit massacres in India. The study began with a hypothesis that there exists a relation among space, caste and gender in Dalit massacres that results in gender and caste-based violence during the massacres. The case studies of the Dalit female experiences of the Kilvenmani massacre and the Marichjhapi massacre confirmed this hypothesis as the caste identity determines the spatial location of the female survivors which renders them susceptible to gender and caste-based violence during the massacres. The Dalit female experiences considerably differed from that of the Dalit males as the former faced physical, mental and sexual violence during the massacres.

2. The findings also indicate that space should be considered as an intersectional category while trying to understand the socio-

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cultural identity and experiences of Dalit women. The creation of gendered spaces of caste or binary spaces that results in differential lived experiences of Dalit women, is evident in both the massacres studied as part of this thesis. This indicates that lower-caste women are spatially segregated into clusters, making it easier for perpetrators to target them. Even the upper caste woman and lower caste women who were located in the same space had different spatial experiences as the later were mostly discriminated based on their caste and gender based intersectional identity. The caste-based spatial segregation can be eliminated by state intervention as it should enforce laws promoting homeownership for lower castes in upper-caste areas to ensure integration (Vakulabharanam and Motiram 2023).

3. The mappings of the massacres revealed the existence of a *third space* (Soja 1996) or an intersectional space where the real and the fictional survivors intersect. Though the potential of such spaces of transgression of the real and the imaginary are yet to be explored, Ghosh (2011) and Mallick (2024) suggests that this intermediary space can become a 'safe haven' for Dalits – symbolising Dalit liberation through socio-economic independence.

4. The causal factors of the massacres suggest that the underlying reason lies in caste and its discriminatory practices that relegates the Dalits to lower class without access to their basic rights and resources. The elimination of caste practices in India, through socio-cultural changes and rigorous institutional interventions, is essential for ensuring social justice for Dalits. "Law should work on social reforms in the places where the violence has already taken place – changing mindset of the perpetrators, eliminate segregation, . . . – rather than letting the victims continue living under the same conditions" (Fuchs

2020). Empowering Dalits, particularly women, through education about their constitutional rights is another crucial step forward.

5. The findings from the case studies and their 'contextualised comparisons' can be applied to other lesser-known Dalit massacres in the country, as caste and its discriminatory practices including spatial segregation are pervasive throughout India. The comparative analysis of the massacres using literary, historical and cultural frameworks revealed similar trends and patterns before, during and after the massacres.

6. From narratives:

   i. There are very few fictional, semi-fictional, and non-fictional narratives on Dalit massacres even on prominent Dalit massacres. The case studies undertaken in this thesis focus on prominent Dalit massacres that have received public attention, resulting in a limited number of textual and visual narratives, in contrast to those massacres that have not garnered similar attention. Considering the potential of literature and myths to raise awareness of historical events and alter the 'politics of remembrances' of marginalised histories, there is a pressing need for more works on Dalit massacres in India.

   ii. The representation of female survivors on the existing narratives is highly dependent on the space, caste and gender of the authors. The lower caste female authors located closer to the site of the massacre or with personal connections to the space were able to depict the nuanced experiences of Dalit females as opposed to male authors who resorted to using a 'heroic' male

protagonist. Hence, there is a crucial need for more narratives from Dalit women and their allies.

7. The use of maps facilitated the following:

    i. Visualise and analyse the location of upper caste and lower caste women

    ii. Clustering of women revealed the creation of upper and lower caste gendered spaces – here Kilvenmani and Marichjhapi which rendered them vulnerable to caste and gender-based violence.

    iii. Because the research proceeded with digital mapping methodology, we were able to detect the use of fictional spaces that are geolocatable along with real spaces in the narratives. This further led to the identification and visualisation of an intersectional third space – where the real and the fictional survivors and spaces intersects. This might not be detected in traditional close reading. Such an intersection also indicated that the narratives that were not explicitly mentioning the massacres were indirectly referring to the same.

    iv. Curating a database for the maps informed the following:

a). The female survivor identities and narratives are very few in number.

b). Even when reported their identity is anonymised while their male counterparts are named. This standard practice of safeguarding the gender identity of survivors highlights the heightened vulnerability associated with gender during Dalit massacres. This protective action is not neutral; it reveals something deeper: that gender plays a crucial role in how violence is experienced and

how vulnerable a person may be based on their gender and caste identities during Dalit massacres.

8. The female survivors are still located in the same space of violence awaiting legal justice and rehabilitation, while the perpetrators remain either acquitted or unidentified. Gender-based violences during Dalit massacres are left unreported or tried in a court of law. There is an urgent need to formulate and enforce stringent laws that guarantee swift and effective punishment of all cases related to massacres and rehabilitation of the survivors.

9. The additional literatures examined indicate that women, especially Dalit women, should be made part of the legal and policy making processes of Dalit massacres.

10. The in-depth literature review of Dalit massacres revealed an absence of official documentation of the massacres, absence of female narratives and failure to utilize digital platforms to amplify the histories of marginalized communities. This led to the development of the first open-access geospatial archive focused on female survivors of Dalit massacres. The archive not only preserves their histories but also serves as a valuable tool to support and encourage future research in this area.

6.5 Chapter Summaries

The introductory chapter locates the Dalits within the discriminatory caste practices in India through a literature review of the current scholarship. Dalit massacres are then contextualized based on three main events: Dalit activism, Dalit literature and Dalit theory. The chapter also brings attention to the differences between Dalit atrocities and massacres to foreground the need for a theoretical, methodological and legal frameworks for Dalit massacres. The mixed methodology of feminist geocriticism and digital cartography is

proposed to understand the space, caste and gender relations in massacres. The methodology and steps, relevance of the study, and ethical considerations are then explained.

The second and the third chapters applies the proposed methodology to the selected case studies of the thesis – the Kilvenmani massacre (1968) and the Marichjhapi massacres respectively. The events before, during and after the massacres are analyzed along with the economic, political and cultural factors that led to the massacres. Selected fictional and nonfictional texts of the massacres are closely read and thematically compared to understand the caste and gender based intersectional lived experiences of Dalit women in the spaces that they occupy. The chapters contextualize and argue for a polycentric, multifocal, feminist geocentric and digital cartographic (QGIS) approach that considers space as an intersectional factor influencing the gendered experiences of the female survivors. Besides an in-depth analysis of the narratives, additional literatures such as land laws, court orders, letters, and petitions, along with the space, caste, and gender of authors, feminist activists, and organizations, to deepen understanding of gendered experiences through feminist geocritical lens of multifocality.

Both the chapters confirms the hypothesis of the thesis about the existence of a relation among caste, gender and spatial location in Dalit massacres and concludes with the following inferences: 1) the caste identity of being a Dalit, determines the spatial location of the female survivors which in turn render them more susceptible to gender and caste-based violence during the massacres, 2) the female experiences of the massacre – real, fiction, upper caste and lower caste are marked by a 'politics of difference' and the survivors are still awaiting legal justice, 3) mappings reveal the existence of gendered spatial hierarchy or the creation of gendered spaces of caste due to

spatial segregation in Tamil Nadu and West Bengal and 4) lack of Dalit feminist narratives of the massacre calls for *Dalit feminitude*, a new political movement and analytical device that uses a combination of lived experience and allyship to advance Dalit feminist anti-caste movements and activism. The chapters end by offering ways to eliminate caste-based spatial segregation in Indian villages and thereby Dalit massacres, via alterations in social and political spaces and institutional frameworks.

The fourth chapter offers a comparative methodology that is a combination of comparative historical, cultural and literary frameworks to compare two or more Dalit massacres. It grounds the findings from chapter 2 and chapter 3 by comparing the selected massacres and its narratives using Comparative Historical Analysis (CHA), comparative cultural analysis and comparative literary theories such as cross-fictionality and intertextuality. The narratives are analysed thematically, as well as for similarities in literary techniques. Literary approaches are utilised to understand the fictional and non-fictional narratives whereas historical method facilitate an understanding of the sequence of events before, during, and after the massacre. Comparative cultural approach helps to comprehend the role of cultural institutions and practices like caste discrimination and socio-spatial stratification in Dalit massacres. The chapter concludes with major findings that mainly focus on the similarities and differences in two main aspects: 1). Gender and caste and 2) Space and caste.

The fifth chapter contextualises the practices of geospatial archiving in DH and offers a methodology and workflow for creating the same using the prototype *Cartographies of Courage: Fictional Threads, Real Lives* project. The project website and the spatial archive, their creation, curation and dissemination are outlined to serve

as a guide to future similar feminist GIS projects especially from India. The possibilities and tensions encountered during the execution of the project, data and ethical considerations, reproducibility and sustainability concerns are also touched upon. The chapter contributes to the current DH and literary scholarship in the sub-continent by offering innovative ways for sharing research that engage both academic communities and the public. The sixth and final chapter of the thesis expands upon the theoretical framework proposed for Dalit massacres and offers a legal framework for Dalit massacres in India. The legal proposal is informed by existing national and international laws and regulations on massacres and Dalit atrocities. The chapter aims to stimulate discussions on advancing theoretical and legal frameworks, as well as actions, to ensure justice for the survivors of the massacre and to prevent future violence.

To conclude, the thesis locates academic and legal gaps in understanding Dalit massacres in India especially in terms of caste, space and gender relations. It offers comparative, legal, theoretical and pedagogical frameworks for understanding female experiences of Dalit massacres in India. It locates the intersectional female Dalit lived experiences in the gendered spaces of caste and establishes space as an intersectional category that determines the gendered and caste-based experiences of Dalit women. By combining feminist geocriticism with digital cartography, the thesis demonstrates the potential of DH and literary analysis in foregrounding the doubly marginalised narratives of the female survivors of Dalit massacres.

6.6 Limitations and Future Research Avenues

6.6.1 Limitations of the Present Study

- The data on the female survivors and other related themes used for the study is collected from English fictional and non-fictional narratives and additional literatures. Expansion of the

database will also imply that the spatial archive and the project website needs to be updated on a regular basis.

- The data is currently anonymised in the project website owing to the sensitivity of the data. This will also impact the reproducibility of the research, as the data will be accessible to any interested individual only upon a thorough review of the request.

- The study does not focus on the other gender survivors of the selected massacres. The present study only explores the experiences of female survivors to understand the space, caste and gender relations in Dalit massacres in India.

- The researchers were unable to access the survivors, resulting in the absence of oral testimonies or direct collections of female narratives. This is mainly because discussing caste-based violence remains difficult in rural India. The survivors are also reluctant to share their experiences with outsiders beyond their communities. The need for institutional support and inside connections in conducting fieldwork on massacres are highlighted by Mallick (2024), "[b]y the time I arrived in India for the field research the massacre was no longer covered, so without family connections I probably would not have discovered it. . . This raises troubling questions about how knowledge about India can be obtained and what is missing." (Mallick 2024, p.72). We also faced difficulties in finding translators who had connections to the communities under study just as Mallick (2024, p. 141).

6.6.2 Future Research Avenues

- The study can be extended to other prominent Dalit massacres in India as the theoretical and methodological frameworks produced are reproducible.

- The existing study and the spatial archive can be further expanded by incorporating data from non-English or regional narratives on the massacres.

- Interviews of authors, survivors and oral history can be included into the project.

- Crowd-sourcing can be implemented to expand the existing database as well as to create new database of Dalit massacres, survivors and related themes.

APPENDIX A-F

Selected Datasets

Note: The coordinates for places in the database entries are obtained from Google My Maps

Appendix A: Source for the Figure 1, Map on the Major Dalit Massacres in India (1965-2018)

Name of the Massacre	Year	Place	Source for Massacre Details
Kilvenmani Massacre	1968	Kilvenmani, Tamil Nadu	Book - The Gypsy Goddess, Meena Kandasamy
Marichjhapi Massacre	1979	Marichjhapi, West Bengal	Book - Blood Island by Deep halder
Karamchedu Massacre	1985	Karamchedu, Andhra Pradesh	Research Article - Karamchedu and the Dalit Subject in Andhra Pradesh by Dag-Erik Berg
Tsundur Massacre	1991	Tsundur, Andhra Pradesh	Newspaper Article - https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/andhra-pradesh//article60039120.ece
Bathani Tola Massacre	1996	Bathani Tola, Bhojpur, Bihar	Research Article - State, Class and 'Sena' Nexus: Bathani Tola Massacre By Arvind Sinha and Indu Sinha
Melavalavu Massacre	1996	Melavalavu, Madurai, Tamil Nadu	Newspaper Article - https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/madurai/where-is-justice-ask-families-of-murder-victims/articleshow/72150246.cms
Laxmanpur Bathe Massacre	1997	Laxmanpur Bathe, Jehanabad, Bihar	Research Article -Battle for Justice and Democracy: Laxmanpur-Bathe by KAVITA KRISHNAN
Ramabai Massacre	1997	Ramabai Ambedkar Nagar Colony, Mumbai	Newspaper Article - https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/mumbai/maharashtra-caste-violence-how-many-more-must-die-asks-aunt-of-1997-dalit-victim-5010679/
Kambalapalli Massacre	2000	Kambalapalli, Kolar, Karnataka	Newspaper Article - : https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/karnataka/kambalapalli-dalit-carnage-main-witness-passes-
Khairlanji Massacre	2006	Khairlanji, Bhandara, Maharashtra	Book - The Persistence of Caste: The Khairlanji Murders and India's Hidden Apartheid by Anand Teltumbde
Mirchpur Massacre	2011	Mirchpur, Haryana	Newspaper Article - https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Delhi/32-persons-convicted-in-mirchpur-caste-violence-case/article24775520.ece
Dharmapuri Massacre	2012	Dharmapuri, Tamil Nadu	Newspaper Article - https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/inter-caste-marriage-sparks-riot-in-tamil-nadu-district-

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			148-dalit-houses-torched/articleshow/17151170.cms
Dangawas Massacre	2015	Dangawas, Nagaur, Rajasthan	Newspaper Article - https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/jaipur/three-years-after-dalit-killings-police-still-stand-guard-in-dangawas/articleshow/66468111.cms
Kachanatham Massacre	2018	Kachanatham, Sivagangai, Tamil Nadu	Newspaper Article - https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/tamil-nadu/the-cruel-face-of-caste-in-kachanatham/article61829337.ece

Appendix B: List of Online Newspaper Articles Collected for the Kilvenmani Massacre

No	Name of the Article Newspaper Articles	Author	Date	Publisher	Link
1	The Hindu Explains | Keezhvenmani: The first chronicle of violence against Dalits in independent India	THE HINDU NET DESK	December 25, 2018 05:02 pm | Updated 05:55 pm IST	The Hindu	https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/tamil-nadu/keezhvenmani-the-first-chronicle-of-violence-against-dalits-in-independent-india/article25826814.ece
2	When All Roads Led to Venmani: Revisiting the Keezhvenmani Massacre	Kavitha Muralidharan	26-Dec-18	The Wire	https://thewire.in/caste/venmani-memorial-revisiting-keezhvenmani-massacre
3	Justice Still Eludes 44 Dalits in Tamil Nadu Who Were Charred to Death 50 Years Ago On this Day	By: Rounak Kumar Gunjan & EDITED BY: NITYA THIRUMALAI	DECEMBER 25, 2018	News18	www.news18.com/news/india/justice-still-eludes-44-dalits-in-tamil-nadu-who-were-charred-to-death-50-years-ago-on-this-day-1983011.html
4	What Do We Know Today About The Keezhvenmani Massacre?	Ambica G	December 27, 2019	Feminism In India	https://feminisminindia.com/2019/12/27/what-do-we-know-today-about-the-keezhvenmani-massacre/
5	50 years after the Keezhvenmani massacre, what has changed for Dalits in Tamil Nadu?	Jayanthi Pawar	25th December 2018 05:05 AM	The New Indian Express	https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/tamil-nadu/2018/dec/25/things-changed-but-a-lot-more-yet-to-be-done-say-experts-1916077.html
6	Dear upper caste Indians, Hathras is not another Nirbhaya. It is a Khairlanji	SOWJANYA TAMALAPAKULA	24 October, 2020	The Print	https://theprint.in/opinion/upper-caste-indians-hathras-rape-murder-nirbhaya-case-khairlanji-massacre/529981/

7	Keezhvenmani: huts ground to dust and ash	Sayani Rakshit	June 2, 2021	People's Archive of Rural India	https://ruralindiaonline.org/en/articles/keezhvenmani-huts-ground-to-dust-and-ash/
8	How the Dalit discourse is playing out in Tamil Nadu, 48 years after Keezhvenmani	Dharani Thangavelu	28 Dec 2016, 04:18 AM IST	Mint	https://www.livemint.com/Politics/DQ9xqDBUL30bAblsOr7gLK/48-years-after-Keezhvenmani-how-the-Dalit-discourse-is-play.html
9	'No One Killed the Dalits'	Meena Kandasamy	28-Nov-15	The Milli Gazette	https://www.milligazette.com/news/6-issues/13400-no-one-killed-the-dalits/
10	20 yrs later, victims of a Dalit massacre still wait for justice	Manoj Mitta	July 28, 2016, 10:34 AM IST	The Timesof India	https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/blogs/Legalairs/20-yrs-later-victims-of-a-dalit-massacre-still-wait-for-justice/
11	Farmers pay tribute to Kilvenmani victims	SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT	JULY 25, 2013	The Hindu	https://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-tamilnadu/farmers-pay-tribute-to-kilvenmani-victims/article4951771.ece
12	Fifty years after caste violence, Keezhvenmani village waiting for daylight	Antony Fernando	23rd December 2018 01:32 AM	The New Indian Express	https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/tamil-nadu/2018/dec/23/fifty-years-on-keezhvenmani-waiting-for-daylight-1915275.html
13	Anniversary of Keezhvenmani carnage observed	P.V. Srividya	DECEMBER 26, 2009	The Hindu	https://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-tamilnadu/Anniversary-of-Keezhvenmani-carnage-observed/article16464029.ece
14	Communists, dalit groups pay respects to Keezhvenmani massacre	R Gokul	Dec 26, 2012, 05:10 IST	The Times of India	https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/madurai/Communists-dalit-groups-pay-respects-to-Keezhvenmani-massacre-victims/articleshow/17762971.cms
15	Fire of 1968 still burning inside	M Manikandan	24th December 2017 02:38 AM	The New Indian Express	https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/tamil-nadu/2017/dec/24/fire-of-1968-still-burning-inside-1735689.html
16	From the Archives (Dec. 27): 42 persons burnt alive in Thanjavur village	FIFTY YEARS AGO DECEMBER 27, 1968 ARCHIVES	DECEMBER 27, 2018	The Hindu	https://www.thehindu.com/archives/from-the-archives-dec-27-42-persons-burnt-alive-in-thanjavur-village/article258354

No.	Name	Source Genre	Source	Location	Location Type	Lattitude	Longitude
						59.ece	
17	Red Rice: caste and class war	N SUNDHAR ABUDDHAN	March 11, 2012, New Delhi	The Sunday Indian		http://www.thesundayindian.com/en/story/red-rice-caste-and-class-war/7/30961/	
18	New memorial to commemorate Keezhvenmani massacre	Staff Reporter	MARCH 10, 2014 00:18 IST	The Hindu		https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/tamil-nadu/New-memorial-to-commemorate-Keezhvenmani-massacre/article11405049.ece	
19	50 Years Later, the Shadow of Keezhvenmani Continues to Hover Over our Republic in Human Rights	Subhash Gatade	27-12-2018	Countercurrents.org		https://countercurrents.org/2018/12/50-years-later-the-shadow-of-keezhvenmani-continues-to-hover-over-our-republic/	
20	Horrors of zamindari is past, now neglect haunts farmers	D. Govardan	26-Dec-17	TOI		https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/chennai/horrors-of-zamindari-is-past-now-neglect-haunts-farmers/articleshow/62259035.cms?from=mdr	

Appendix C: Database of Prominent Writers of the Kilvenmani Massacre

No.	Name	Source Genre	Source	Location	Location Type	Lattitude	Longitude
1	**Nithila Kanagasabai**	Research article	The Din of Silence: Reconstructing the Keezhvenmani Dalit Massacre of 1968	Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), Mumbai, India	Institutional Affiliation	19.04491525	72.91248494
2	Navneet Sharma and Pradeep Nair	Research article	Kilvenmani to Javkheda: An Antithesis to Ambedkar's Nation (2015)	Central University of Himachal Pradesh, India	Institutional Affiliation	32.22465305	76.15657914

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3	Hugo Gorringe	Research article	Which is Violence? Reflections on Collective Violence and Dalit Movements in South India (2006)	The University of Edinburgh, Scotland, UK	Institutional Affiliation	55.94807215	-3.188048502
4	Jean-Luc Racine and **Josiane Racine**	Research article	Dalit Identities and The Dialectics of Oppression and Emancipation in a Changing India: The Tamil Case and Beyond (1998)	Pondicherry	Residential	11.93511747	79.80442921
5	**Kathleen Gough**	Research article	Indian Peasant Uprisings (1974)	Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu, India	Fieldwork	10.77129938	79.1198483
6	**Parvathi Menon**	Research article	Speaking Up: Voices from Agrarian Struggles in Thanjavur (2017)	Foundation for Agrarian Studies, Bengaluru, India	Institutional Affiliation	12.97780773	77.64227727
7	**Gail Omvedt**	Research article	Capitalist Agriculture and Rural Classes in India (1981)	Kasegaon, Maharashtra, India	Residential	17.12568069	74.18859558
8	Unknown	Research article	Death of a Mirasdar (1980)	-	-	-	-
9	Indira Parthasar	Fiction	Chorapuzha (Kurudhipuna	Chennai, Tamil	Residential	13.08285765	80.27067781

		l/The River of Blood)	Nadu, India			
10	**Meena Kandasa my**	Fiction	The Gypsy Goddess	Thanjavu r, Tamil Nadu, India	Native Place	10.77129 938	79.11984 83
11	Poomani	Fiction	Heat (Vekkai)	Kovilpatt i, Tamil Nadu, India	Native Place	9.172780 379	77.87135 109
12	Sreedhar Rajan	Film	Kann Sivanthal Mann Sivakum	Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India	Resident ial	13.08285 765	80.27067 781
13	T. Nagarajan	Film	Aravindhan	Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India	Resident ial	13.08285 765	80.27067 781
14	Kamal Haasan	Film	Virumandi	Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India	Resident ial	13.08285 765	80.27067 781
15	Vetrimaar an	Film	Asuran	Ranipet, Tamil Nadu, India	Resident ial	12.95036 405	79.32311 594
16	**Mythily Sivarama n**	Non-fiction: Essays	Haunted by Fire - Gentlemen Killers of Kilvenmani	Kilvenm ani, Tamil Nadu, India	Fieldwo rk	10.71121 322	79.73353 379
17	Bharathi Krishnak umar	Non-fiction: Documen tary	Ramayyavin Kudisai	Kilvenm ani, Tamil Nadu, India	Fieldwo rk	10.71121 322	79.73353 379

Appendix D: Database of the Location of the Prominent Feminist Activists on the Kilvenmani Massacre

No.	Name	Location (origin/ massacre related)	Latitude	Longitude	Type	Source
1	Krishna mmal Jaganna than	Chennai	13.082 85765	80.27067 781	Historical representat ion - Activist	https://www.newindi anexpress.com/states /tamil-nadu/2018/dec/23/fif ty-years-on-keezhvenmani-waiting-for-daylight-1915275.html
2	Mythily Sivaram an	Kilvenma ni	10.711 21322	79.73353 379	Historical representat ion - Communis t, Activist, Writer	https://en.wikipedia. org/wiki/Mythili_Siv araman
3	Meena Kandas amy	Thanjavu r	10.771 29938	79.11984 83	Historical representat ion - Writer, Activist	The Gypsy Goddess
4	Manalur Maniya mma	East Thanjavu r	10.791 01501	79.13810 367	Historical representat ion - Communis t, Activist, Upper Caste Widow	https://www.thehind u.com/entertainment/ theatre/mangai-and-her-theatre-of-liberation/article325 14603.ece
5	Kathlee n Gough	Thanjavu r	10.771 29938	79.11984 83	Historical representat ion - Writer, Researcher	https://en.wikipedia. org/wiki/Kathleen_G ough

Appendix E: List of Online Newspaper Articles Collected for the Marichjhapi Massacre

Title	Name of Online Newspaper	Name of Author	Date	Link
The Forgotten Massacre of Dalit Refugees in West Bengal's Marichjhapi	The Wire	Debjani Sengupta	03-Oct-18	https://thewire.in/history/west-bengal-violence-marichjhapi-dandakaranya
40 yrs ago, the Left mercilessly massacred Dalit Bengalis. Now, it's back to haunt them	The Print	DILIP MANDAL	15 May, 2019 11:17 am IST	https://theprint.in/opinion/40-yrs-ago-the-left-mercilessly-massacred-dalit-bengalis-now-its-back-to-haunt-them/235648/
1979 Marichjhapi killings revisited	The Statesman	asim pramanik	23-Mar-14	https://web.archive.org/web/20141006163744/http://www.thestatesman.net/news/45845-1979-marichjhapi-killings-revisited.html?page=1
Genocide will be justified!	The Sunday Indian (in Bengali)	Mitra, Sukumar		https://web.archive.org/web/20130623102857/http://www.thesundayindian.com/bn/story/%E0%A6%97%E0%A6%A3%E0%A6%B9%E0%A6%A4%E0%A7%8D%E0%A6%AF%E0%A6%BE%E0%A6%B0-%E0%A6%B8%E0%A7%81%E0%A6%AC%E0%A6%BF%E0%A6%9A%E0%A6%BE%E0%A6%B0-%E0%A6%B9%E0%A6%AC%E0%A7%87/2/505/

Ghost of Marichjhapi returns to haunt	The Hindustan Times	Snigdhendu Bhattacharya	Apr 25, 2011 03:45 PM IST	https://www.hindustantimes.com/kolkata/ghost-of-marichjhapi-returns-to-haunt/story-4v78MhnW2IZVCQMPfDObqO.html
The Forgotten Story Of The Marichjhapi Massacre By Marxists	Swarajya	Jaideep Mazumdar	Jan 30, 2017 10:59 AM	https://swarajyamag.com/politics/the-forgotten-story-of-the-marichjhapi-massacre-by-marxists
The Marichjhapi Genocide of 1979 – A vivid example of Communist Deceit and Brutality	Goa Chronicle	GC News Desk	02-02-2021	https://goachronicle.com/the-marichjhapi-genocide-of-1979-a-vivid-example-of-communist-deceit-and-brutality/
Jyoti Basu is the mass murderer India forgot	opindia	Abhishek Banerjee	8 July, 2020	https://www.opindia.com/2020/07/jyoti-basu-marichjhapi-massacre-bangladesh-refugees-west-bengal/
Infamous Marichjhapi Massacre – when they turned refugees in their own land!	Get Bengal	Information Desk	21-06-2020 06:31	https://www.getbengal.com/details/infamous-marichjhapi-massacre-when-they-turned-refugees-in-their-own-land
Wound still raw for Marichjhapi survivors	Times of India	Kamalendu Bhadra	Updated: Feb 1, 2013, 03:38	https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kolkata/Wound-still-raw-for-Marichjhapi-survivors/articleshow/18281775.cms
Marichjhapi and the Revenge of Bengali Bhadralok	Round Table India	Anoop Kumar, Ajay Hela	20-Jul-12	https://roundtableindia.co.in/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=5447:marichjhapi-and-

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Appendix F: Database of Prominent Writers of the Marichjhapi Massacre

No.	Name	Source Genre	Source	Location	Location Type	Lattitude	Longitude
1	Rose Mallick	Research article	Refugee Resettlement in Forest Reserves: West Bengal Policy Reversal and the Marichjhapi Massacre	Kanata, Ontario	Residential	45.30882914	-75.89868223
2	**Nilanjana Chatterji**	Thesis	Partition the Long Shadow	Brown University	Institutional Affiliation	41.82685629	-71.40309
3	Atharobaki	Research article	"Why Dandakaranya a Failure, Why Mass Exodus,. Where Solution?", Partition the Long Shadow				
4	**Meenakshi Mukherjee** on Manoranjan Byapari	Research article		JNU, New Delhi	Institutional Affiliation	28.5486036	77.16847907
5	Manoranjan Byapari	Autobiographical	Interrogating my Chandal Life-An Autobiography of a Dalit	Kolkata	Residential	22.58843959	88.35416262
6	Amitav Ghosh	Fiction	Hungry Tide	New York	Residential	40.71450462	-73.99698919
7	Deep Halder	Oral History	Blood Island	Noida, Uttar Pradesh (India Today)	Institutional Affiliation	28.53730336	77.40287468
8	**Jhuma Sen** (Editor: Urvashi Butalia)	Non-fiction	Partition the Long Shadow	Sonipat, Haryana (Jindal Global Law School)	Institutional Affiliation	28.92644718	77.05662749
9	Shaileen Chakravorty	Non-fiction	Partition the Long Shadow				
10	**Anasua Basu Ray Chaudhury**	Non-fiction	Living Another Life: Un-homed in Camps	University of Calcutta	Institutional Affiliation	22.57456227	88.363092
11	**Ishita Dey**	Research article	On the Margins of Citizenship: Cooper's Camp On the Margins of Citizenship: Principles of Care and Rights	Calcutta, (Calcutta Research Group)	Institutional Affiliation	22.58843959	88.35416262
12	Debdatta Chowdury	Research article	Space, Identity, Territory: Marichjhapi Massacre, 1979	School of Law, University of Westminster, London, UK	Institutional Affiliation	51.52075925	-0.140138554
13	Pratip Kumar Bose	Research article	Refugee Memory and the State	Kolkata, Centre for Studies in Social Sciences	Institutional Affiliation	22.47439748	88.3923692

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