Internet trolling is a pressing concern on social media platforms and has a strong correlation with the objectification of women's bodies. It constitutes a substantial extension of online violence directed at women, who are frequently singled out based on their physical appearance, weight, or sexual behaviour.

This form of harassment inflicts severe damage on the mental health and overall welfare of its victims. According to a study conducted by the Pew Research Center in 2014, women are more frequently subjected to online harassment, particularly on social media platforms (Duggan, 2014). Women who advocate for issues concerning gender or sexuality are especially prone to such harassment. Powell and Henry's (2017) investigation into the experiences of women subjected to online harassment revealed that those who express feminist views or lend support to the #MeToo movements are often targeted.

This kind of harassment may include sexually suggestive insults, threats, explicit messages through direct messages (DMs), and disparaging comments regarding their physical appearance. Online trolling takes various forms, with body-shaming and personal attacks being among the most prevalent. Body-shaming involves targeting individuals for their body size, shape, or appearance. Personal attacks, on the other hand, may include insults, ridicule, or threats based on personal characteristics, such as race, gender, sexual orientation, or religion.

Online abuse and harassment disproportionately affects Dalit and tribal women, who experience more frequent and severe incidents compared to other groups. This type of abuse often takes the form of derogatory comments that target their physical appearance and perpetuate harmful caste and gender stereotypes.

My essay investigates the life experiences of four contemporary scholars and activists who belong to Dalit and tribal communities. Through interviews with these women, I gained insights into how online trolling affects their personal lives, the lasting trauma they endure, and the coping mechanisms they employ.

**SURVIVING TROLLS**

**ESTHER, 25**

"When Draupadi Murmu became president, I wrote a viral post about it. There were a lot of people who targeted me and my religion. I used to sit down and make a list on my right-wing account to block them. It used to be challenging to moderate at the end. Dalit and Tribal Women often face more online trolls because coming from a Dalit or Adivasi these women don't have the agency to speak and raise their voices.

**THE WITCH SAYS**

"Women face trolls in personal spaces too. These trolls later transcend into Social Media. Trolling for my page has been done by Men from my Community, they follow me and wait for me to post so that they can troll. Some of them says very mean things. They troll me because they cannot see women occupying Online spaces.

**MARY, 27**

"We are racially profiled when we voice our opinions. "Being vocal on social media is not a safe option for individuals from certain communities. Any personal info out there is weaponized against you."
All names of the respondents, except for Shalin who is a Dalit activist and writer from Tamil Nadu, are anonymized. Esther is a 25-year-old Adivasi academician, while Mary is a 27-year-old self-taught tribal artist and scholar in literature. Additionally, there is an Instagram page called 'The Witches of Arunachal' that advocates for gender rights of indigenous women in Arunachal Pradesh.

Shalin Maria Lawrence is a prominent Dalit voice in the contemporary social media landscape, especially on Twitter. She is an activist, author, and intersectional feminist whose writings primarily focus on Dalit and women's rights. During our conversation, she narrated experiences of hate directed towards her life on the internet, stating that fellow Dalit women face death threats daily, but people do not discuss or acknowledge it. As Dalit women, they are perceived to deserve such treatment, without any freedom of expression. Shalin shared her experience of being body-shamed on Twitter and becoming the subject of memes within the online community. This not only silenced Shalini, but it also demoralized other women in the community, rendering them unable to speak up. This underscores the destructive impact of online abuse on marginalized women and their ability to engage in online discourse.

She adds, "It is not just the right wing that poses a threat to us. The secular left, including those in Tamil Nadu, also view us as a threat and subject us to abuse and name-calling. They engage in body shaming and have made comments about my appearance, such as my teeth and body shape, as they view Dalit women's bodies as abnormal and not conforming to Aryan beauty standards."

Dalit women experience triple layer of oppression due to their caste, gender, and class. They are kept at the lowest strata of society due to the caste patriarchy. Similar to women of color, Dalit women are more susceptible to online violence against women compared to other women. Shalin also pointed out that the secular left, including the left in Tamil Nadu, see Dalit women as a threat, and therefore abuse and body-shame them, commenting on their appearance, teeth, and body shape. Dalit women face triple layers of oppression through the gradation of caste, gender, and class, and they are more susceptible to online violence than other women.
Conclusion
Dalit and Tribal women have historically been vulnerable targets due to their social identities and low status in patriarchal society. As marginalized groups, they are dehumanized and subjected to hate and abuse, including through online trolling. Despite this, many women have shown remarkable strength and courage in standing up to trolls and fighting back. Through conversations with Dalit and Tribal women who face constant trolling, I learned about the various strategies they use to cope with online bullying. For example, Esther created a Telegram channel to share her trolls with close friends, while Mary participated in a clubhouse session only open to people from the Northeast. Shalin emphasized the need for greater awareness and stronger regulations to combat cybercrimes and ensure safer online environments for women. She also pointed out the reluctance of the police to take action against Dalit women who face trolling, demonstrating that the state often prioritizes disciplining and censoring the victims rather than punishing the perpetrators.
Unfortunately, research on online violence against women remains limited, and the issue of intersectionality has yet to be fully addressed. However, this study has sought to shed light on the types of trolling experienced by Dalit and Tribal women and develop new strategies for addressing it. The lived experiences of scholars, artists, and activists have informed the framework presented here. Through this brief research, we can better understand the impact of online trolling on women from margins and the periphery and work towards creating safer and more inclusive online spaces for all.

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