



# Retweeting brahminical patriarchy

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## **Retweeting brahminical patriarchy-It is either mischievous or ignorant to claim that 'brahminical' only refers to brahmins**

- Imagine a celebrity Indian CEO going to the United States and having himself photographed with women of colour while holding a poster that said, "Smash racist patriarchy".
- And then, imagine white Americans coming down on him like a tonne of bricks, accusing him of inciting hatred and violence against white Americans.
- Now imagine him actually apologising to the American public for wanting to end racist patriarchy.
- Well, this, or at least a version of this, has actually happened.
- Not in the la-la land of Donald Trump, but right here, in the world's largest democracy.

### **The act and reaction**

- Recently, the Twitter CEO, Jack Dorsey, on a visit to India, had an informal discussion with a group of Indian women journalists, activists and writers about their experience on Twitter.
- In the course of the meeting, he was gifted a poster by one of the participants which read, 'Smash Brahminical Patriarchy'.
- When a group photograph of Mr. Dorsey posing with that poster surfaced on Twitter, it became an immediate target of outraged trolling.
- Mr. Dorsey was accused of being a "brahmin-hating, racist bigot" was also accused of propagating hatred towards "people who constitute 5% or less" of India's population.
- Many compared the sentiment expressed in the poster to antisemitism, asking if he would dare pose in the U.S. with a placard advocating hatred of Jews.
- The public apology was tweeted out in its wordy entirety not once, not twice, not three times, but eight times.

## Social order of caste

- Someone patient enough to carefully poke through the mass of outrage piled up against Mr. Dorsey and his poster might discern the vague outlines of an argument, which essentially boils down to brahminical patriarchy coming to the defence of brahminical patriarchy.
- First of all, it is a truth universally acknowledged (except in the parallel universe inhabited by certain species of trolls) that 'Brahminism' refers not to members of the brahmin community but to the oppressive social order of caste.
- As for the usage of the term 'brahminical', it is either mischievous or ignorant to claim that it only refers to brahmins, and therefore, the poster constituted hate speech.
- The term (spelled as 'brahmanism' or 'brahminism'), then, has been in currency for a long time as a descriptor of a social order marked by the graded inequality of caste.
- Therefore, this sudden eruption against it makes no sense except as a reactionary backlash against the steady mainstreaming of anti-caste politics on social media.
- Given that caste remains a powerful determinant of status and life chances in Indian society, such a backlash is perhaps not entirely surprising.
- But what is, is the alacrity with which a powerful multinational firm, with pretensions to liberal values, chose to pander to feudal sentiment.

The Hindu

