

Voice via Violence: Dalit Women contesting Caste Masculinity

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This research investigates the intricacies of an “ontological hotspot” where caste oppression, gender-based violence, and Dalit agency converge. To do so, it employs a confluence of Dalit female voices that resonate through works like *Ants Among Elephants* by Sujatha Gidla, *The Gypsy Goddess* by Meena Kandasamy, and *Father May Be an Elephant and Mother Only a Small Basket, But...* by Gogu Shyamala. A rigorous perusal of these works is undertaken by calling into aid certain theoretical frameworks that include Raewyn Connell’s “Hegemonic Masculinity”, Kimberlé Crenshaw’s “Intersectionality” and Judith Butler’s “Gender Performativity”. It is the primary purpose of this study to lay bare the mechanisms through which caste and gender intertwine to confine and subjugate Dalit women. It also ponders over and puts forward the counter-narratives that Dalit women craft in defiance and as response. “Hegemonic Masculinity” delineates how masculinities (upper-caste) subjugate women (Dalit) by using violence and sexual control as a tool. “Intersectionality” demonstrates the intersection of caste and gender that doubly marginalizes Dalit women, rendering them invisible and thus inconsequential. “Gender Performativity” explores the menagerie of gendered performances that necessitates submission which is resisted through subversion. With the aid of the above-mentioned narrative and theoretical frameworks, this study places women at the centre of an ontological critique that thirsts for the coming out of Dalit women via vying for power, visibility and agency.

Keywords: ontological hotspot, Hegemonic Masculinity, Intersectionality, Gender Performativity