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## Inclusive Schooling in India: Issues & Solutions

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### Abstract:

*The harsh reality of the deep-rooted caste system in India is not very hidden. The discriminations associated with caste system are very complex, oppressed and suppressed. Education became a fundamental right in India in 2010. Even in this 21<sup>st</sup> century when we talk about reaching moon, it is still tough for marginalized students to enter the class room as caste continues to affect the educational experiences in India. This system has imprisoned Indians since birth, denying them not just resources and opportunities but also basic dignity. It acts as a barrier in learning and participation. Untouchability was abolished in Article 17 of the constitution and it is punishable offence yet we hear cases of exclusion and humiliation.*

*The school is often treated as a sacred place where a child's foundation is laid. The dreams, character, and experiences are shaped in their second home. The teachers, peers and school authorities play an important role in child's life more than home in this phase. Here they are taught to be confident, compassionate, witty and smart. But what happens when that space is filled with trauma, humiliation and seclusion? And the reason being caste, which becomes a reason of exclusion thus, turning the school from temple to a battle-ground. This definitely leaves a lifetime wound in the child. This paper tries to explore the caste-based discrimination in Indian schools primarily. I will use cinematic representation as a tool to show how caste affects individuals and how they are marginalized. This paper will also reflect on Artificial Intelligence (AI) and how can AI be useful in this regard to encourage a pedagogical shift toward inclusivity in Indian schools. In this paper, Qualitative research method will be used, primarily secondary sources, content analysis and film analysis.*

**Keywords:** Caste, School education, Movies, AI, Discrimination

### 1. Introduction:

India is home to diverse languages, cultures, religions, castes and creeds. In India, we are not only divided on the basis of economic status or biological status, but there is also a division based on work, known as caste. While many theories explain the origin of caste, it was primarily a division of labor. However, over time, this system got transformed into an oppressive and suppressive framework that ascribes an individual's rank on the social ladder of society. It is a living, breathing entity, adapting and evolving to survive in the modern world. When western education was introduced during the freedom movement, people began traveling to unite



others, and the idea of untouchability started to diminish slightly in broader contexts. However, it remained deeply ingrained in the belief system. Education is the basic human right. It became a fundamental right in India by the 86<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment Act, 2002 and got enshrined in the Article 21A of the Constitution. It mandates free and compulsory education for children within the age group of 6 to 14 years, thereby fulfilling the state's obligation to provide equitable access to quality education. The Right to Education Act, 2009 makes education free and compulsory and also sets benchmark for schools and educational institutions. Education is the force that drives the nation.

Despite India's strong legal framework aimed at eradicating caste-based discrimination, this insidious social evil continues to affect various aspects of society, including education. Schools, as the foundational institutions of learning and socialization, bear a significant responsibility in addressing and resolving this issue. But it is seen that teachers, as influential figures in a child's life, can unintentionally perpetuate caste-based discrimination through their attitudes, behaviors, and classroom practices. Subconscious biases, rooted in societal norms and cultural beliefs, can manifest in various ways such as differential behavior and treatment, stereotyping or use of caste slurs. It impacts a child's mental and social well-being, academic performance and future opportunities.

Film provides an extensive observation of society, trying to capture and refracting its social, political and cultural aspects. It serves as a means of interaction that communicates discourses from both the present and the past, spreading awareness, insight, and a living document of human experiences. The film's narration provides contemporary insights, facilitating an understanding of sociocultural dynamics. A film plays the role as an institution, influenced by and defining issues of class, caste, gender, and race, validating its complex relationship with societal structures. In this 21<sup>st</sup> century's fast pacing world, Artificial Intelligence (AI) has made the world a simpler place. It has answers for all questions. In reimagining pedagogy, AI can provide various solutions. This paper looks at how education in schools of India is affected due to caste, through cinematic lens, it highlights the challenges and discusses regarding the role of AI in fostering Inclusive education in India.

## 2. Literature Review:

The casteism communalism and linguism are acting as barrier to national growth and development according to B.R. Ambedkar (Easterraj 2017)<sup>1</sup>. He says that these social evils have

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<sup>1</sup> Easterraj, M. Daniel. "Alienation of Caste Leading to Radical Change." *International Journal of Applied Research*, vol. 3, no. 7, 2017, pp. 828-832. *International Journal of Applied Research Archives*, <https://www.allresearchjournal.com/archives/2017/vol3issue7/PartE/3-6-157-828.pdf>.



divided the society into different units. Caste discrimination oppresses and suppresses people in India. The division of labour is embraced by the caste system but unfortunately it has created division of labourers. According to Ambedkar, an ideal society would be based on liberty, equality, and fraternity (Easterraj 2017)<sup>2</sup>. Ambedkar opines that caste system was designed for division of labour but it divided the labourers. According to Karl Marx's, alienation is the outcome of the division of labour. According to Karl Marx, a worker loses his choice to choose his destiny and life as his right to think of his own life has been snatched away. Caste is deeply ingrained in the minds of individual that reflects in their words, behavior and actions. Some people have separated themselves from this system whereas are many are under its clutches and practice it in one way or other. Louis Dumont's idea of pure and impure is still central to practice of casteism in the society...In recent years the Government has issued rules that all public wells, roads, railways, schools, post offices and other public buildings be opened to the Depressed Classes on equal terms with other people, but the enforcement of these rules rests upon local public opinion, which is often hostile. Not many years ago the only schooling allowed to Outcaste children was what they could get as they stood outside the school door. If they were admitted inside, the caste parents would withdraw their children. But between 1917 and 1926 the number of India's Outcaste pupils rose from 195,000 to 667,000. The latter figure being barely over one percent of the Outcaste population (Olcott, 1944)<sup>3</sup>

Indian Cinemas have a great hold on the people of India. It is based on their narratives thus affects them positively and vividly. Cinema has become a powerful vehicle for culture, education, leisure and propaganda (Shah, 2023)<sup>4</sup>. Movies communicate the stories of society itself to the society only. AI has become advanced in just few years. It has made life easier as it can help us with anything. In just the past three years, AI systems have proven that they can meet – and exceed – human performance in image recognition, speech transcription, and direct translation, they have learned how to drive, identify relevant information in a paragraph to answer a question, recognize human faces (even if pictures are blurred) and human emotions, create their own encryption schemes and detect malware; detect crop diseases; write cookbook recipes, sports news articles, movie screenplays, music and published poetry– and are able to find their way around the London Underground using a map... (De Spiegeleire, Maas, & Sweijis, 2017)<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Easterraj, M. Daniel. "Alienation of Caste Leading to Radical Change." *International Journal of Applied Research*, vol. 3, no. 7, 2017, pp. 828-832. *International Journal of Applied Research Archives*, <https://www.allresearchjournal.com/archives/2017/vol3issue7/PartE/3-6-157-828.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> Mason Olcott. (1944). The Caste System of India. *American Sociological Review*, 9(6), 648–657. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2085128>

<sup>4</sup> Shah, V. (2023, October 19). *The role of film in society*. Thought Economics. Retrieved from <https://thoughteconomics.com/the-role-of-film-in-society/>

<sup>5</sup> De Spiegeleire, S., Maas, M., & Sweijis, T. (2017). *Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Defense*. The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies. <https://doi.org/10.19165/2017.978-94-92102-54-6>



### 3. Research Gap:

There have been studies on caste system and education, but a few studies on impact of caste in school education and on bridging the gap. Cinemas have a profound impact on the society and there has been no use of cinema studies in understanding caste discrimination in schools. This paper has been written from cinematic lens to show how caste plays role in schools. And with advancement of AI, the aspect of including AI in pedagogy can help reduce social inequalities in schools. This paper aims to show that how cinema can help us to understand social and cultural realities and by technological integration, we can address the caste-based discrimination in Indian schools.

### 4. Emergence of the Problem:

**Objectives:** The objectives of this paper are-

- i) To understand the impact of caste in school education in India;
- ii) To examine how Indian Cinema portrays caste-based issues in education and its potential in creating a social change by spreading awareness.
- iii) To understand how AI-driven solutions can help in inclusive education

### 5. Rationale of the Study:

This study is based on the critical need to address caste-based discrimination in India's education system esp. schools, which makes us realize that equitable learning opportunities are still a dream for many. The study connects social realities and technological advancements by analyzing cinematic representations and suggesting AI-powered solutions. It emphasizes systemic barriers in education while investigating AI's potential to eliminate biases, promote inclusivity, and improve pedagogical practices. The dual focus is on the overarching goal of rethinking inclusive education and actually facilitating social equity through innovative and insightful methods.

### 6. Methodology:

This paper has followed qualitative research method, emphasizing on content and cinema analysis. Through content analysis various texts on caste, education, cinema and AI have been examined to explore ideas around the topic. Through cinema analysis few films portraying caste-based discrimination in society and schools have been analyzed to represent social realities. The research is based on grounded theory and narrative research. I first reviewed the articles and various texts. I watched and reviewed the movies to express the points. Review of documents and cinemas was the tool used for this study.



## 7. Study Conducted:

Through qualitative analysis, the paper examines the effects of caste discrimination in Indian schools, concentrating on how it is portrayed in movies and how it manifests in real life. The study looks at how caste-based prejudices affect student experiences, academic opportunities, and social dynamics in educational institutions by examining narratives from movies and cases that have been documented. It examines possible avenues for establishing inclusive and equitable learning environments using AI while highlighting structural obstacles and cultural norms that sustain inequality. Secondary data on caste discrimination in schools are gathered from scholarly articles, and reports. Additionally, films depicting caste issues are analyzed to draw parallels between real-world practices and their cinematic representation. Data is gathered using a systematic review and thematic categorization, ensuring that it is consistent with the study's focus on educational inequalities and the role of caste. Furthermore, the study investigates the role of artificial intelligence (AI) in promoting pedagogical shifts toward inclusive education. AI tools are evaluated for their ability to detect biases in instructional materials, create personalized learning experiences, and improve teacher training. This combined methodology focuses on both systemic barriers and technological opportunities for reimagining equitable education in India.

## 8. Analysis of Collected Information:

The study divides its findings into three themes. First, articles, documented cases and film narratives demonstrate caste-based discrimination in schools, highlighting systemic exclusion, teacher biases, and peer discrimination, all of which have an impact on the psychological and academic well-being of marginalized students. Second, cinema acts as a reflective medium, highlighting societal biases and barriers to inclusive education. Finally, AI-powered tools emerge as transformative agents capable of detecting biases in instructional materials, personalizing learning experiences, and training educators to promote inclusivity. These findings highlight the interaction of culture, technology, and systemic reform in education.

## 9. Findings revealed from the Data Analysis:

There is structural inequality in the education system of India. A Times of India report states that 30% of Tamil Nadu schools have caste [discrimination](#)<sup>6</sup>. It's sad that children are facing the harsh realities of the society at young age. I have personally experienced how one's title like Das, Mishra, Nayak, Nai, Barik, Sethi etc. have given the privilege to the teachers, staffs and peers to

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<sup>6</sup> Times of India. (2023). Caste discrimination in 30 TN schools: Survey.

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/chennai/caste-discrimination-in-30-tn-schools-survey/articleshow/106241887.cms>



mock them and their father's caste-based occupation. The structural inequalities lead to discrimination in class rooms and extra-curricular activities. The teachers are treated as Gurus in India but at times the teachers are biased and their attitudes differ from students to students. The use of cattiest slurs is very provoking and disheartening. People use these slurs to demean the marginalized section.

As I was working on this paper, it was very tough for me to find any relevant cases on caste-based discrimination in schools as there is not much work on this. Therefore, I have analyzed 4-5 movies to express my point. The virtual storytelling has a great impact on the society. It expresses the stories of people. It highlights the realities, also fosters empathy, agenda and awareness.

- i) The first movie that I reviewed is a Hindi movie, [Article 15 \(2019\)](#)<sup>7</sup>. It is directed by Anubhav Sinha. The movie is inspired from the Article 15 of the constitution which says there can be no discrimination in the name of caste, class, creed and gender or place of birth. In this movie, we could see scenes where the upper caste people are taking pride in their caste and are demeaning the marginalized and treating them as inhuman. This movie portrays the idea of purity and pollution. We can also see the use of casteist slurs in the movie, which depicts the mindset of people regarding the marginalized caste.
- ii) The second movie is Tamil movie [Raatchasi \(2019\)](#)<sup>8</sup>. It is directed by Syed Gowthamaraj. In this movie, there is a scene where two groups of students were fighting wearing different bands and the two different bands represent two different castes to which they belong. Thus, we can see how caste feelings are vivid in an educational space also.
- iii) The third movie is hindi-language drama named [Super 30 \(2019\)](#)<sup>9</sup>. It is a real life story directed by Vikash Bahl. In this movie, how the marginalized and oppressed groups are undermined in terms of education. The famous dialogue of the movie, "Raja ka beta hi raja banega" which means the son of the king will be the next king which expresses the mindset of powerful people in the society. In this movie, there was a counter dialogue which was "Raja ka beta raja nahi banega, raja wahi banega jo hakdaar hoga", which means a king's son won't be the next king but rather the deserving will be the king. Thus, irrespective of caste, class and status, a person can aspire for bigger things in life and achieve them also.

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<sup>7</sup> Sinha, A. (Director). (2019). *Article 15* [Film]. Zee Studios.

<sup>8</sup> Gautham, S. (Director). (2019). *Raatchasi* [Film]. Dream Warrior Pictures.

<sup>9</sup> Tiwari, V. (Director). (2019). *Super 30* [Film]. Phantom Films, Reliance Entertainment, and Nadiadwala Grandson Entertainment.



- iv) The fourth movie is [Guthlee Ladoo \(2023\)](#)<sup>10</sup>. It is a hindi-language movie directed by Ishrat R Khan. The story centers around Guthlee, who is the son of a sweeper. He was intelligent and wanted to study but he was not even allowed to enter the school classroom premises. In one scene, he was standing behind the walls of the classroom and answered a question which the class couldn't. The headmaster was sympathetic to him but he was also bound to the chains of societal norms, beliefs and practices.
- v) The fifth movie is [Chalk n Duster \(2016\)](#)<sup>11</sup>. This hindi movie was directed by Jayant Gilatar. This movie shows the relation of teacher and student and also the adversities faced by them in the day by day changing educational system.

There are many such movies related to this. The teachers belonging to marginalized section also face discrimination. The Artificial Intelligence challenges the traditional pedagogy. The lack of inclusivity, discrimination mindset and issues in addressing diverse learning methods is challenged by AI. It can be used in delivering personalized content to students as per their needs and requirement. It can also help in detecting any kind of biasness or discrimination in textbooks and teaching pattern. It provides multilingual space for students. As everyone is close to technology, it provides an adaptive learner platform to all students. AI mentors and Chatbots can help students in academics and can also be a safe emotional space for students as it is value neutral. Virtual classroom & virtual reality can provide an all new and supportive space for students.

## 10. Conclusion:

It is high time; we reimagine schools' spaces free of inequality and also need to change the traditional pedagogy. The teachers should be more empathetic and diverse. The practice of discrimination or inequality should be highly checked in schools to avoid any emotional, physical, psychological or social damage. More movies expressing social realities should be encouraged. The collaborative effort of technology, teachers and policy makers can help us dismantle this caste system. There should be more surveys regarding caste-based discrimination in schools. Though AI can help us to create an inclusive space beyond barriers, regions and languages, but it is ethically incorrect to keep it free from human interaction.

## 11. Delimitation of the Study:

This paper is an analysis of caste discrimination in Indian school education using documented cases, scholarly articles, and selected films. The scope excludes primary data collection and field

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<sup>10</sup> Khan, I. R. (Director). (2023). *Guthlee Ladoo* [Film]. UV Films.

<sup>11</sup> Subramaniam, J. (Director). (2016). *Chalk N Duster* [Film]. Surani Pictures.



studies. While the study examines AI's role in promoting inclusivity, it focuses on theoretical and potential implementations instead of direct application. Furthermore, the study focuses on the Indian context, with no comparative analysis of caste-like systems in other countries. This ensures a focused exploration of the relationship between caste, education, and technology in India.

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