

CASTE IN THE CURRICULUM: Documentary Films as Pedagogical Tools

It is apparent that caste consumes everyone- from the Brahmin priests of the Chidambaram temple who continue to practice child marriage, to McDonalds substituting paneer for beef in their Indian burgers, to the dalit women and men of Khairlanje who get raped and lynched for asserting their humanity. Yet caste in the undergraduate and postgraduate curriculum continues to be practiced much in the same way –rarely moving beyond the presumed ‘commonsensical’ discussions on reservations and meritocracy and efforts to ‘caste-sensitize’ the curricula usually ‘add units on dalits’ to the existing syllabus. Caste in the curricula appears not a system of domination, discrimination and exploitation, but just a classificatory category. This project seeks to address the ways in which we knowingly and unknowingly engage with this much contested category as students, as academics or through our multiple roles. The project works through practices of curriculum transformation, bringing together teachers, scholars in the field of caste studies, students, activists and filmmakers. The agenda is to rethink and broaden the discourse on caste in the curricula by engaging with mainly documentary films and panel discussions around them.

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