

Antar Bhasha

Filmmakers: Ankita Bhatkhande, Dinesh Kumar Mahapatra, Eleanor Almeida, Janminlian Vualnam, Shuaib Shafi

Director's Note

We started the process of making this film by first understanding the issue, and moreover where we fit into it. Of the five people that made up the team, I had never faced situations where caste would come into the question - I'd had a very sheltered and privileged upbringing. We had conversations between ourselves and spoke to several people to understand the crux of the matter; Ankita especially had conversations with several professors and linguists and shared them with the rest of the team. These conversations helped us gauge the ground reality of the issue we were after and convinced us that we were on the right path - though none of us had noticed the glaring casteism prevalent in each of our mother tongues (Marathi, Odiya, Malayalam), we realized, through these conversations and research papers that we found, it had always been the case. One of my team mates had never faced these issues with his language - he is from Manipur - and this brought about interesting aspects to the conversation we had because of his questions and observations.

As we went about production, we found the topic to be quite vast, and problems of streamlining it to a 20 minute film presented itself. Then we questioned how we could present it in the simplest and most basic of ways and we decided that the first step to understanding the issue would be the way language is taught in educational institutions, as that is where one learns and un-learns the 'rights' and 'wrongs' in one's language. Syllabus and teachers facilitate in this understanding of the world through literacy. And we found ourselves learning how from a young age the process of 'pure' and 'impure' makes a foray into a child's mind.

We found the questions that our characters asked about language, reflected within ourselves too. Though our languages were different, we found our issues were the same. And through our characters we found a deeper understanding and meaning to our mother tongue, and understood how dialects create judgement.

The title of the film: Antar-Bhaasha has dual meaning - 'antar' can mean *within*, and 'antar' is also *distance*, a language within a person, or a language creating distance between people.

(Compiled by Eleanor Almeida)