

Silence Please!

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Director's Note

When the overall topic of caste in the city was given to us, all five of us felt that it is important to address the problem of caste erasure from its very root. To us, that root was firmly in the Indian school and education system.

We decided that the best way to do this was to speak to the teachers who are responsible for imparting education, and to the students to hear about what they understand, directly from them. Having been part of the same system at different points, we were aware of the problematic way in which caste was spoken about. But this realisation happened only in retrospect. We realised that we were all taught about caste in our history textbooks, as if it did not exist in the current times. Caste was not co-related to economics or politics. It was treated as a mistake of the past, committed by our ancestors.

The one place where the talk of caste inevitably comes up is in relation to reservations. This was the case 7/10/15 years ago and this is the case today. Students are directly or indirectly told that reservation is not needed today and that it directly affects their chances of getting into colleges. They are not taught or told the rationale and statistic behind reservations, which is extremely important.

Though we were aware of the fact that there are very strong connections between food and caste, we did not think that we will have to address it in our film which is on education. But as we spoke to students and teachers, we realised that food was a more direct manifestation of caste in their everyday lives than anything else. Most students had strong opinions against non-vegetarianism, which appears to have stemmed from what they were taught in their classes. But the same students were all aware of the existence of caste and were unanimously against discrimination of the basis of caste. This contradiction can only be attributed to the way that they are taught about caste.

This film was a small yet sincere attempt from our side to speak about the dangerous flaws in the education system, which goes on to form the base for a child with regards to a lot of social issues. If we don't take care of the way in which we speak about caste (and class, gender, sexuality etc.) here, we don't have any real shot at tackling the issue on a higher level.