

Deconstructing Social Hierarchies: A Critique of Article 15

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Abstract:

Indian society has historically been shaped by deeply embedded structures of caste, class, gender, and social privilege. Although the Constitution of India establishes equality as a fundamental democratic principle, caste-based discrimination continues to influence social relationships, institutional practices, access to resources, and experiences of justice. Anubhav Sinha's 2019 film *Article 15* offers a cinematic intervention into these persistent inequalities by examining caste oppression through the framework of a crime investigation. Named after Article 15 of the Constitution of India, which prohibits discrimination on grounds including religion, race, caste, sex, and place of birth, the film exposes the contradiction between constitutional ideals and social realities. This paper critically examines *Article 15* as a cultural text that attempts to deconstruct social hierarchies and represent systemic caste oppression in contemporary India. It explores the film's treatment of caste, institutional discrimination, police corruption, gendered violence, privilege, resistance, and constitutional morality. At the same time, the paper interrogates the film's reliance on an upper-caste protagonist as an agent of justice. It considers whether this narrative structure reproduces a saviour framework that limits Dalit agency. Drawing upon the ideas of B. R. Ambedkar and scholarship on caste and social inequality, the study argues that *Article 15* succeeds in bringing caste discrimination into mainstream cinematic discourse but remains ideologically complex in its representation of marginalised communities. Ultimately, the film demonstrates both the possibilities and limitations of popular cinema as an instrument for challenging entrenched social hierarchies.

Keywords: *Article 15*, caste discrimination, social hierarchy, Dalit representation, constitutional morality, Indian cinema, social justice, Anubhav Sinha