



# Thinking through Meritocracy: Caste in Indian Institute of Technology Bombay

A Documentary Film

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## Approval

This Visual Communication Project, **'Thinking through Meritocracy: Caste in Indian Institute of Technology Bombay'** by Aswin Yogesh R, M.Des. Communication Design during the academic year 2016-17 is approved as a partial fulfilment of requirements of a post-graduate degree in Communication Design at IDC School of Design, IIT Bombay.

External Examiner: 

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## Declaration

I declare that this written submission represents my idea in my own words and where other ideas or words have been included, I have adequately selected and referred the original source. I also declare that I have adhered to all principles of academic honesty and integrity and have not misinterpreted or fabricated or falsified any data, facts or sources in my submission.

I understand that any violation of the above will be cause for disciplinary action by the institute and can also evoke penal action from the sources that have not been properly cited, or from whom proper permission has not been sought.



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## Abstract

Meritocracy is a social system in which people hold positions exclusively based on their abilities. But India as a democracy undertakes several measures to reduce the inequality caused by historical prejudices by showing positive discrimination like caste based reservations.

The Indian Institutes of Technology were established after Independence to create trained technical personnel of international standards for the nation. In order to establish “merit” as the only criterion for admission into these institutes, they were originally exempted from policies of reservations. Extant structural inequalities ensured that only the “already-privileged” could find their way into these spaces of “merit”. As a result, these institutions have until recently been almost exclusively populated by the upper castes, who, through the

instruments of merit, were able to transform their caste capital to modern, “caste-less” capital.

All this changed with the introduction of a 22.5% reservation for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in 1973 and 27% for Other Backward Castes in 2006. This has transformed the IITs into heterogeneous, complex and often volatile, politically-charged spaces.

The encounter of the ideologies of meritocracy and of caste in the spaces of IIT Bombay throws up interesting, difficult questions. This film is an attempt to identify, articulate and interrogate the complexity caste brings to the IIT Bombay campus by exploring the stories of people who are part of it.

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## About Caste

Caste is a closed system of stratification in which social divisions based on the occupation of people are followed strictly according to a code of behaviour in marriage and kinship. These divisions are unequal and ranked on a scale of hierarchy based on their ritual status, ranging from pure to impure. This status determines whom one can interact with and whom one cannot. The 'idea' of untouchability is an integral part of this system. (Surinder S. Jodhka)

From identifying themselves by their occupation or the caste name, the lower castes of India have come a long way in many spheres of their lives except their social status (Surinder S. Jodhka). From owning land to holding higher ritual status, the upper castes have been adopting to positions of value in the post-independence India of democracy and globalization.

While the fundamental rights in our constitution provide basic human rights for all citizens irrespective of race, place of birth, religion, caste, creed or gender and the fundamental duties suggest the moral obligation of all citizens to uphold the unity of India, the directive

principles provide for redressal of caste disabilities, implemented through the State's positive discrimination policies which make available reservation of seats for low castes in education institutions and jobs.

In this conversion of caste capital to modern capital, the reservation of seats have effectively rendered those with historically accumulated caste capital as 'casteless' thereby enabling them to claim to be the embodiment of the modern India without caste. Those who fall within the general category claim to be there not based on their accumulated caste privileges but rather based on their own merit. They in turn argue about merit and equality in competition and opportunities. The state's action to redress caste injustice through reservation is therefore seen as suppressing and victimizing the general category by denying them opportunities based on the assumed merit. (Subramanian 2015)

## Caste in Indian Institutes of Technology

I observe the community inside IIT Bombay, and ask myself if caste system exists here, the results are in the affirmative. The people who traditionally held higher ritual status and engaged in activities that involved the learning and propagation of knowledge, administration, trade etc. continue to dominate the same spheres today. At the other end of the spectrum, people who were traditionally untouchables and were considered impure continue to be employed in positions that are similar or identical to the ones their caste traditionally practiced. However, the student community shows equal representation from all sections of the society, owing to the implementation of reservations in seats for the underrepresented population.

I attempt to navigate through the varying landscapes inside the campus by engaging with a diverse range of people from faculty, students and staff to the janitors, gardeners, electricians and cooks. I'll then present them by

counter posing one against the other to challenge the casteless mainstream narrative of the campus.

Classroom, the mess, the student activities area, faculty and staff residential areas, the many parks, playgrounds, lawns, gardens, walking corridors, construction sites, student hostels, offices are the touchpoints where I explore the presence of caste.

Caste has been acknowledged in the mainstream conversations only in the reservations provided for Scheduled Caste (SC 15%), Scheduled Tribes (ST 7.5%) and the non-creamy layer students from Other Backward Caste (OBC-NC 27.5%) categories. In addition to this, the state's positive discrimination policy is mistaken for an action to provide economic equality to Indians rather than social equality which misleads the whole mainstream debate on reservations, mostly the arguments placed in favour of meritocracy.

Does the caste factor strongly associated with the low-regarded positions in the campus spill over to the ones that are well regarded, like the teaching and learning jobs?

I believe that it does, in spite of the reservations that are provided. For example, the caste identity associated with the Public Health Organization of the institute - housekeeping, pest control and rodent control, disposal of dead animals etc. doesn't affect the narrative and has become almost invisible like the students that secure admissions purely on JEE or other entrance exam merit. Therefore, it becomes important for me to understand what happens in IIT Bombay if the state doesn't positively discriminate based on one's caste. What would the composition of the student community be like if not for the reservations?

When students argue against the reservation policy of the state while completely discounting the caste inequities deeply entrenched in society and which reflects in the merit as well, what does it do to the ones that are the beneficiaries of this reservation who sit right among them with their background and sufferings completely discounted by the meritocratic? This question was the trigger that led me into looking at caste more seriously in the campus.

Aniket Ambhore, the Dalit IIT Bombay student who committed suicide in the year 2015 was scorned and made to feel undeserving of his place in IIT for not performing well in his academics and being from a reserved category with lower JEE rank. He, like many of the beneficiaries of the State's positive discrimination was made to feel as if he was 'crying victim and living on excuses'. After reading the report by a committee set up after his death in 2014 (the committee submitted its report just a few months after I joined here in late 2015) I'm even more doubtful of the will of the administration, faculty and student community to assimilate and take in wholeheartedly people from the lower castes who access IIT Bombay through reservations. Many of the small but critical shortcomings on the part of the administration and faculty are still not addressed, like access to help in times of distress for a student who might be a victim of caste prejudice.

Thus it becomes essential to present the unpopular narrative, as the popular one has completely failed in terms of displaying the truth. At the same time when the 'casteless' stand as the front line of defence and argue in favour of Meritocracy, their counterparts outside the

bounds of an intellectual campus unleash the worst forms of discrimination and violence against Dalits, tribals and other castes that are disprivileged.

## Literature Review

The ability of an individual to choose and develop his/her competencies to the fullest and mindfully contribute to the functioning of society is what John Dewey, the American philosopher termed 'Social Efficiency'. B.R.Ambedkar, in his text 'Annihilation of Caste' borrows this term to explain how, to make permanent progress and bring in social reform, the system that pre-determines a person's occupation on the basis of caste must be reorganized. (Ambedkar et al. 2014)

While Ambedkar argues for the destruction and reorganization of the existing social organization, politics and economy, on the other hand, Gandhi, in his book Hind Swaraj found India's indigenous education where each one followed his or her own occupation or trade as ideal. He further speaks critically about western society's individualism and hedonism. (Gandhi 1909) This difference in approach to the envisioning of an ideal Indian society between these two leaders led to a clash on the issues of separate electorate for Dalits in the communal award by the British which considerably

shaped modern India and its policies. (Ambedkar et al. 2014)

The foundation laid by these two figures from the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century led to OBC and Dalit uprising and social mobilization in the later half. The emergence of Dravidian politics, anti-brahminism, dalit politicians like BSP chief Mayavati ruling Uttar Pradesh, the most populous state of the country, VCK chief Thol Thirumavalavan being a deciding factor in the Tamilnadu politics etc. were a continuation of the earlier events. M.S.S Pandian in his work 'Brahmin and Non-Brahmin' elaborates how most events like the disproportionate presence of Brahmins and other upper castes in positions of power are treated self-evident and opens up a space to rethink and understand them.

Satish Deshpande points out the same as 'common sense' which often gets ignored. For example, the upper castes dominating the Indian Institutes of Technology have been treated as common sense and is ignored in popular conversations. He further elaborates the resentment and hostility towards the studies conducted on such common

sense issues as they are considered to be highlighting the barbarity of Indian culture and traditions.

Prof. Ajanta Subramanian from Department of Anthropology at Harvard University has published her work on the social life of caste in Indian Institutes of Technology. She sheds light on how the story of caste is being taken over by something other than caste, like in the case of IITs, nation building or modernization.

## Making a Documentary Film

The unseen and unheard stories of our colleagues, neighbours and classmates must be told. Views of all kinds to be represented, counter posing one against the other to have the meaning emerge by itself.

### Approach

The film is built over recording of conversations with students and a peek into their everyday activities that include both academic, non-academic and at times personal. Over time, I have become friends with most of these students and other individuals presented in the film and recordings are done only after having proper acquaintance and trust.

The film revolves around three areas namely

- Interviews
- Extra-curricular activities of students
- Support staff activities in the campus
- General community life inside campus

## Interviews

I'm introduced to the interviewee days ahead of the recording to get them comfortable to share their experiences on camera. I considered the background of a person in terms of rural/urban, reserved/general, gender, program of study etc. while picking them for the interaction.

I met almost 50 individuals and most of these conversations lasted about an hour. There have been instances (Akash Wallania) where the initial conversation even lasted three hours at a stretch.

I sometimes took notes (about 10 interviews), and about a few times voice-recorded the initial conversations for reference.

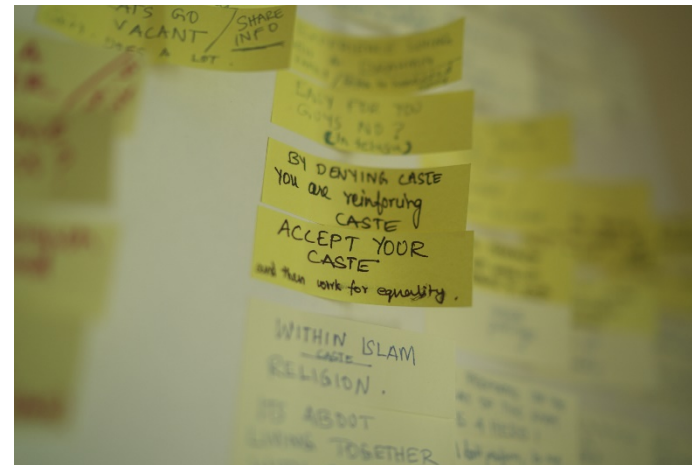
A few days after the first conversation, I invite them for another one-to-one interaction on camera. About 20 of those people agreed to be recorded and these were done over a period of three months. The interviews on camera lasted anywhere between an hour and two hours.

After each round of recorded interviews, I come back to the editing desk and trim them. A gist of what was being shared by the interviewee went on my wall stick-notes along with the ones from other interviews. This helped externalize, chunk and organize the thoughts shared by the many people better to be used on the film.





The film is structured in chapters in the following order







1. Introductions
2. Formations
3. Imagining IIT
4. Destination IIT
5. Victims and Oppressors
6. 'Special' Programs
7. Professors
8. Relationships







Total recorded footage: 22 hrs 40 mins. Below is a gist of the interviews.

## Recorded Interviews

Interviewee	About	Designation	Note	Year	Cat
<b>Shuvam Bharti</b>	17 year old from Ranchi, very eager to achieve something in life. His father is a Government servant and provided him with an upbringing away from the caste ridden neighbourhoods as much as possible	Student	B.Des.	1	SC
<b>Subhalakshmi</b> 	A very conscious person about not making an 'error' in the way she interacts with people from upper castes.	Student	B.Des.	1	SC
<b>Arun Jayaramakrishnan</b>	Seems to be supporting the caste system and a very strong believer in astrology. Son of a sitting member of Tamilnadu Legislative Assembly.	Student	B.Des.	1	OBC
<b>Akash Kumar</b> 	Son of an office peon, second generation beneficiary of reservation system. Wishes to go back to his village in western UP and set up a school once he is done with IIT Bombay.	Student	B.Tech.	2	SC
<b>Harshit Sahay</b>	Well-read and understands the implications of caste and reservations in IIT Bombay. Politically correct opinions.	Student	B.Tech.	4	Gen

<p><b>Leffin Christophoher</b></p> 	<p><b>Anti-reservation, but maybe comes from a family that benefitted from reservation. Conflicting statements and believes that putting a rocket in mars is a bigger achievement than building a modern toilet.</b></p>	Student	B.Tech.	4	OBC
<p><b>Gulam Sarwar</b></p> 	<p>Gives great insights into the castes within the Muslim society. Academically high performing and has gone through instances of caste discrimination before coming to IIT Bombay.</p>	Student	B.Tech.	3	OBC
<p><b>Rajath Chandrahasa</b></p> 	<p>There are many things Rajath wants to say but wouldn't as he fears for how he will be perceived in the campus.</p>	Student	B.Tech.	4	Gen
<p><b>Palash Waghmare</b></p> 		Student	B.Tech.	4	SC
<p><b>Stanzin Tsundus</b></p> 		Student	B.Tech.	2	ST
<p><b>Ayush Ravi</b></p> 	<p>Finds caste affecting even relationships among people.</p>	Student	B.Tech.	4	OBC

<b>Charvi Rastogi</b> 	Charvi doesn't know which caste she belongs to, but acknowledges how privileged she is to not know her caste. Teaches scheduled caste children in Phule Nagar outside IIT.	Student	B.Tech.	3	Gen
<b>Prashant Kumar</b> 	A Buddhist. Thinks that the Professors doesn't pay much attention to courses during summer which are predominantly attended by underperformers.	Student	B.Tech.	4	SC
<b>Shubham Chouhan</b> 	Talks about the advantages he had as an upper caste person in North India.	Student	B.Tech.	4	Gen
<b>Anshul Verma</b>	First year student, wants to become a civil servant after IIT.	Student	B.Tech.	1	SC
<b>Laxman Kumar</b>	Laxman follows the same route as Anshul and wants to be a civil servant.	Student	B.Tech.	1	SC
<b>Pandya</b>	Working in hostel 13 for the past 15 years and is considered as the best gardener in IIT Bombay.	Staff	Gardener		SC
<b>Suraj</b>	Keeps my hostel wing clean. Rest of the time he is doing a correspondence course through distant learning.	Staff	Housekeeper		SC
<b>Kranti Kumar</b> 	Identifies caste discrimination happening in classrooms, juries etc.	Student	Ph.D.	3	SC

<b>Naveen Gurrapu</b>	Thinks that caste based discriminations are very much happening in campus and narrates several instances.	Student	Ph.D.	2	SC
<b>Deepak Pandiaraj</b> 	Follower of Ambedkar and is very pained to see open caste discrimination in IITs. Friend of Aniket Ambhore and Rohit Vemula.	Student	Ph.D.	3	OBC
<b>Sunkanna Velpula</b> 	Missed several years of primary school, severely affected by caste discrimination in his village. Worked as a waiter, truck cleaner etc. before re-entering the academic world eventually completing his Ph.D. with distinction	Faculty	Post-doctoral Fellow		SC

## Interactions without recordings

<b>Prof. Sudharshan Iyengar</b>	IIT Bombay	Professor	Distinguished Chair Professor in Gandhian Philosophy
<b>Parth Shrimali</b>	IIT Bombay	Student	B.Tech.
<b>Shreerang Javadekar</b>	IIT Bombay	Student	B.Tech.
<b>Shivam Kumar</b>	IIT Bombay	Student	B.Tech.
<b>Harsh Parmar</b>	IIT Bombay	Student	B.Tech.
<b>Pranjal Batra</b>	IIT Bombay	Student	B.Tech.
<b>Abhijeet KR</b>	IIT Bombay	Student	M.Des.
<b>Herold PC</b>	IIT Bombay	Student	M.Des.
<b>Chandni Rajendran</b>	IIT Bombay	Student	M.Des.
<b>Pradeep Adhisekar</b>	IIT Bombay	Student	M.Des.
<b>Vivek Paul Joseph</b>	IIT Bombay	Student	M.Des.
<b>Shirali Tyabji</b>	NID		M.Des.
<b>Paankhi Agrawal</b>	IIT Bombay	Student	M.Phil.
<b>Prathamesh Murkute</b>	IIT Bombay	Student	M.Tech.
<b>Feba Varghese</b>	IIT Bombay	Student	M.Tech.
<b>Tanmay Tathagat</b>	IIT Bombay	Student	Ph.D.
<b>Ananth Krishna</b>	Entrepreneur	-	-
<b>Prof. Ramesh Bairy</b>	IIT Bombay	Professor	-
<b>Prof. Kushal Deb</b>	IIT Bombay	Professor	(email)
<b>Dr. Krishnamurthy K</b>	BARC	Rtd. Scientist	-
<b>Prof. Sharmila</b>	IIT Bombay	Professor	-
<b>Sudharak Olwe</b>	Photographer	-	-

## Short Transcriptions

### Kranti Kumar

"I'm a born Dalit, but I will not die as a caste ridden Dalit." Kranti Kumar started his conversation with this statement. He spoke about how caste and the hierarchy gets internalized and even the privileged ones won't realize it. The disprivileged ones too get used to it and wouldn't care much about unfair treatment, "haan, yeh log aise hi dekhenge".

You were always asked and told to check and re-check what to do and what not to do. When you come from a certain caste background, you've been told what to eat, what not to eat, what to touch, what not to touch, in public. You'll do whatever, at your place, in your house, with your family; but then, when you're in a primary encounter with the others, with the non-dalit, you don't know whether to eat with them, you don't know whether to do with them.

So the first thing they'll ask is your caste, then they'll ask your cut-off, then only they'll talk to you. And for long, in

this conversation, it dwells as if you are here only because you have reservation. It doesn't matter after the course how much you score in the things or how much augmentation you are doing in the class. And they'd have these nuanced words, they'll not use the word 'caste'. "Haan, tumhara background aisa hai na." So I had this instance. "What do you mean 'tumhara background aisa hai?'" Very sophisticated way of saying it. "Haan, I can understand, your background is Dalit no?" "What is my background, you are talking about my caste?" I don't have a problem, talk it out na.

### Gulam Sarwar

Gulam is a Ansari Muslim from Bihar and is doing B.Tech. Mechanical Engineering in IIT Bombay. He was admitted through the OBC quota and he considers that the reservation gave a good push for him to get into a better IIT. However, he considers himself capable to perform on par with the general category students and his academic grades are very good.

He has gone through painful experiences not just because of his religious background, but also because he belongs to

the Ansari caste that is considered low. He is sometimes looked down upon by his friends and their families because of his caste. He made up his mind that only way to get out of this treatment is to study as hard and possible and become meritorious. A general attitude of people when dealing with him have been like 'either be from my caste or from a high caste'.

When he got admitted to IIT Bombay, the general reactions from his neighbors are like, "How can he from a low caste go to IIT when my son has done coaching etc.". Even in IIT, his roommate's parents have asked him for his rank and wondered how he could get into IIT Bombay with a lower rank than their son.

He sometimes feel embarrassed to admit that he got admitted to IIT Bombay through reservation. However, he feels that once someone is into IIT, there are equal opportunities for everyone. General category students hold grudges against him since they feel cheated as someone with ranks lower than theirs could get better departments. They argue that reservation pollutes the IIT environment institutions like IITs must not have reservations.

He considers the mentorship programs like ISMP doesn't work well since none who conduct the program are motivated to help students by understanding their diverse backgrounds. However he appreciates the efforts. IIT has now become a place where people openly talk about homosexuality, women and menstruation but still no one dare talk openly about caste.

### **Rajath Chandrasaha**

Oh yeah, so people use um... there are such abuses in um... casteist word. One of them is 'chamaar'. It's a ca... backward caste and 'bhobde' I think so. I don't know. These are all backward caste which people use. People don't really realise, like I don't know if they realise it or not b... this is basically making fun of someone, saying that you are from backward class. If people don't do this, I think it is a much better appreciation. Okay, I remember one incident. So, we were in um... so this was by athletics coach. So it was my very first year. We... I was in NSO Athletics. So we were taking attendance, so some guy with Meena surname was late. So this b... athletics coach um... in front of everyone. So we were all sitting. We were all

first year students, when people are like maximum judgemental state. So this guy is like 'um... Meena um... this is at... attendance is not like your reservation. You can't come late and um... get attendance'. This is what they told in front of everyone. So I don't know how he felt. So, that is... that was super rude. I don't... I didn't understand pe... there were people who laughed at it. So, I didn't feel it was rude, but now I realise, okay, that was actually very rude for a... someone in working here, who is a sports coach, to say that.

Privilege or the higher caste that 'okay, we can make fun of them in such ways and get away with that', but no, it does hurt... affect lot of people, specially when someone is in teenage, when... I don't it's anyone's problem that they are here because of reservation. Even um... like, no one, if they... anyone had an option, they would not be born in

lower caste. They are not like 'okay, let me come from under-privilege, let me be a s... slumdog millionaire and let me make my way up.' No, everyone would like to cost, come in a privileged background. They don't want to be from a under-privileged background and move to it. It's not their problem. They were choose um... they choose to be born in lower caste. But when people a... just take advantage of it and make fun of it, I think it's really bad, which I think insti should change. I hope the future generation at least does, but looking at all the anti-reservation which a... whenever I see on facebook, I don't think there are... we had progressing, but not in a faster pace. People should understand. If not, all the sociology, psychology, every HSS course is useless for um... making it compulsory in insti.

More transcripts of the interviews are added at Appendix I

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## Appendix I

### Transcripts of interviews

#### Kranti Kumar

Research Scholar, Dept. of Humanities and Social Sciences

I am a born Dalit (laughs). I hope so, like Ambedkar said, I'll not die as a caste-ridden Dalit. I'll redeem myself someday.

So the first question is not whether caste is right, wrong, bad or good. The first question is that caste is existent and we have to recognise it, and speak of it; then comes the merit and demerit of it. When you are low caste or low class, you get used to it. You get internalised, in certain sense, you don't have the privilege of, you know, minding too much of the unfair treatment or anything. You get used to it. So you don't give a damn. After some time it matters, "haan, yeh log aise hi dekhenge", they'll treat you this way.

You were always asked and told to check and re-check what to do and what not to do. When you come from a

certain caste background, you've been told what to eat, what not to eat, what to touch, what not to touch, in public. You'll do whatever, at your place, in your house, with your family; but then, when you're in a primary encounter with the others, with the non-dalit, you don't know whether to eat with them, you don't know whether to do with them, and the kind of backgrounds you have come from, your family or...i mean, like my grandmom and all, they would take it for granted. they would never say a word against somebody upper caste from their own village. Sometimes, they'd be like "woh.. Reddy unnadu", Reddy types.. you know, Reddys in our place, I don't know what's it in Tamil Nadu. Ah yes, the Goundars and all. So you wouldn't say a word to them. So when you're a child, when you're a kid, then you have been brought up, certain internalisations, certain socialisations happen, where you have been told to watch yourself, whether you are saying it right or not. You have to cross check. But then it doesn't happen that way with the upper caste kids, you know. They have certain privilege. You have been told

to. I mean..like “Karo, uske baad dekhenge” types. You do first, then, consequences, you’ll have to manage with it. So that happens with the public also. When you come to the class, when you come to presentations and all, you have even more a fear of whether I am doing it right or not. My experience in parallel has been, I mean, what you see or hear, when the upper caste kids come no, caste is.. caste works like this. I mean, in the sense, upper caste and lower caste it works like this. You don’t owe the privilege you have, because it comes in socialisations and all. That privilege in certain sense you could afford to, because you are better off with clothing, you are better off with food, you are better off with your kind of access to resources, social spaces and everything. And you are better off with the access to education as well, and it all feeds into your confidence. Where as, that constant non-access to the things marks your boundary for a low caste guy. It makes it tougher. You know that you always have to make a choice because a choice again has a choice in it. First you have to make a choice whether to give this fight or not. You know that it’s inaccessible, now you have to make a decision whether to try for it or not. Now, if you try for it, it’s gonna be a fight, and that is gonna be humiliating. Well, you know that that humiliation will end up in better

results, but you have to make choice of a humiliation first, to come through it, which is a tough thing.

So now there is an emblem. Sarkar ka emblem hai. You have a stamp from the Ministry, a letter from them. So now its like “Haan, yeh kuch kar raha hai.” This was in my second year. I was almost towards the end of my third semester. So now, “Haan, yeh kuch kar raha hai. We don’t know what he’s doing, but then he’s doing something, and it’s worthwhile.” They’ve given him money to study, they don’t understand the concept of fellowship and all, they understand the concept of scholarship since we were in school and all. Now the scholarship cannot be more than 10,000 Rupees (laughs). So now it’s like salary only no. “Paise leke koi tumhe padha raha hai toh chalo padho.” Now the government is taking you on abroad trips, so now it’s even more better. And this trip was..um.. somehow.. again in six months I had to go to Germany and similar kind of presentations I made and all. So then they got settled ki “Haan, yeh kuch kar raha hai, but isko time lagega, but let him do.” Only towards my third year they agreed ki “Chalo, three more years hai, you do your PhD. You’re doing something, we know, and you are not reliant on us.” Okay. So it’s

constant proving within, because being born into a lower caste or lower class itself is so much of an expectation. Now, having reservation is not that easy, since you have come to access of these resources, you always have the burden of giving back to the community, because always the younger in the generation, haan, the younger ones are looking up to you. They are always looking up to you, because the opportunities you bring them, they're all new. It's not about you, it's more about the community that is afterwards. So now after... suddenly after all this, while taking arts and experimenting with my life choices, all these uncles and aunts and everything...so now the other guys, they were also not believing and all, now they suddenly come up to me and say, "My kid wants to do this, what should I do? He feels like a break. What should I do?" My own younger brother who wanted to have a break from his B.Tech and experiment with things. When you come from certain privileged background, you have, you know, that affordability to experiment. You could take a break for a year, or you could change a stream and ask somebody to invest a lakh or two into training for a better course. But then when you come from this background, what you have to do is, if you have to experiment, you have to sustain yourself first. You have to answer a lot,

that's a different thing, but the easy way of escape is that you don't rely on everybody. Not relying on anybody is to sustain yourself. So you have to have a job for yourself, or you have to tell them a means where you are on your own, still experimenting in a worthwhile position. So lot of.. the kind of education system condition that goes into, you are always being told to do B.Tech, ya toh teacher. Hamaare yahaan yahi chalta hai, ya toh you do your teacher training, ya you do your B.Tech, or you do your MBA, and get a government job or a private job, even into marketing, and that's it. The easy way of settling down things, which is also problematic, because it also drives you back into the same position. You are just earning a standard job, but then you can't make that break, that social break. You have to catch up with the others, no? You have to make yourself.. so that, unless you experiment and come out, you can't do anything of that sort. You have a lesser training, like you said, so you are not fluent, most of the time you have problem with the language. And you.... forget about somebody ridiculing you on these grounds, it's the fear of getting ridiculed. So most of these juniors look for that one senior, whom they can associate with. And when that senior is of your caste, that is even more better because he knows the background and all,

languages and everything. So that has been more of a benefit for me, because when I go to these campus places and all, I look for these guys because I've never had such seniors in my life. I had, I had 1-2 seniors and all, so I want to be that 1-2 seniors now, because then they come up to you asking "haan, what should I do next?" Then you can tell them "Move, don't settle for a minor one, go for a bigger phase, a bigger hunt." There are umpteen opportunities, the social justice ministry gives scholarships, National OC Scholarships, which I never knew. I would have applied if I had known earlier. And those seats actually go vacant. The government gives you avenues but then the information about the same is inaccessible. And I belong to those rare chunk of people who have come to these spaces and have information about that. Now getting this information back to the community is itself big, I think.

Because I am more assertive an animal, you know, caste animal, so people won't dare coming up to me and saying things like that. But I could give you a recent, a very recent example. Like, I was doing my fieldwork, staying with a friend. He was a school teacher, in the field, I mean, in Vijayawada, where my work is mostly, and they

are upper caste Brahmins. So now after all these experiences, what you do is, it's a.. we have a saying in telugu, it says "antyanishturam kante aadinishturam melu", which means it's better to get humiliated early, than later. Humiliation is earlier.... you got it, no? So what that means is, better you reveal your true identity, get humiliated, and thing gets over there, other than to get better treated and then your identity gets revealed and all. So..most of the times what happens is.. now with urban spaces and educated spaces, everybody knows that we should not be discriminative on the basis of caste and all, or at least you should not sound so. But then, your families might not do that, you know, they might be old school. Family spaces are different spaces. So when this friend offered me a stay, I said, "See, I am a Dalit, and am not accusing you of any discrimination and all. But then you are a Brahmin, and I know you don't, you would never discriminate me, but then you are educated and it's a different deal for you. You are interested in some kind of politics. Your family may not be. So you better tell your family, your father, mother and brother, that I am a Dalit and that I'd be staying with you. And if they don't have a problem, I'll stay with you. But if once I am there and then there is this sense of discrimination, then that'll not

be nice.” So I go, I go stay with them. The first day, when this guy goes out, then his mother speaks to me, “See, we don’t do that and all, but then.. we don’t do caste discrimination and all, but then there are some things, you know, that we should follow and all. And Kiran wouldn’t understand it, so don’t reveal these things to him, we’ll keep it within ourselves.” I, like, laughed at it and.. then she gets to know me better, she gets to know that I’ve been to college here, school there and all. Then she says “Haan, haan tum logon ko na jaldi mil jaata hai na, easy for you, it’s easier for you guys, you know, reservation hota hai.” I mean, these were all conversations in Telugu, am just trying to translate it for you, so that you’ll understand... It’s like “meevalulo thoraga vachesthaayi, reservation untundi kada.” Like, “you get it easier, because you have reservations no? Jobs and all, it’s tougher for us, we have to give it.” And I was like, okay, I need to be decent, I should not say anything because there is no point arguing. So she tells me “See, I want you to leave and stay somewhere else for a couple days, because our relatives will come and Kiran is like this, but if uncles and anybody else knows that you are so and so background, they wouldn’t like it, they would ...um.. and I want you to leave.” I’m like, okay! That was a humiliating conversation you know.

Then it ends with saying, “Anyways you guys are not supposed to listen to those chantings we do.”

There was one time when when.. I mean, I am a sociologist, ethnography is my priority, so I have done a lot of projects where I would go to villages, enquiring and all. So I was a part of this international diary project. So we would go to villages, and we had schedule of socio-economic survey and everything, we have to invest three hours of interviewing, ask them how does that happen. So now every village you go to has a Dalit hamlet and a main village. So my supervisor, who is a Dalit...by then... and the team.. it was two teams together, 5-5 of us, three of us students were Dalit and one of the supervisors was Dalit. And we knew, because we are all from the same.... So now every time I go to the main village, my supervisor would ask me to say if they ask your caste, tell it to be a Reddy, or a upper caste caste background and be sure with your.. it’s tricky haan.. if you go to field and all, if you have to, if they ask caste and all, sometimes they are a little cautious also, they’ll end up asking your gothra and surname and all also, so you have to manufacture all that. So he would say don’t tell them you are a Dalit, because they would not let you come or they would get offended.

Then, now you have come for data collection right, you can't be aggressive with them, they will not give you data. So you have to lie about your caste in the first place. Then, even more hurting is, they'll end up saying things about Dalits. And you have to listen to them. And if they are saying it to Dalits, it's saying to you basically, right? I peculiarly remember this one instance where we were curious where would we get beef in the village. And there was this young group who would say, "Haan, milta hai na wahan pe. You'll get it there." like "where?" "The hamlet you know? Dalitavada", they say. Malavada Madigavada. Usually Mala and Madiga are the prominent Dalit caste within Telugu speaking states. So you have a Mala hamlet and a Madiga hamlet. So they would call it Malapalli, Madigapalli or Malavada, Madigavada, based on the region they are in. So they were like, "Haan, woh wahan pe karte hain. Haaw, hum log nahi khate." Then it doesn't stop there. Then it goes on to say to things about..umm..a little humiliating things.. And they are telling it in confidence that they think you are not a Dalit. But they don't know that I am the same no? I have been eating beef forever. So it actually comes as a humiliation. So I said, "See you ask me to get 20 samples I'll get it. But then kal se tum main village mein jaao. I'll not even come to the

main village. I'll go to the Dalit hamlet. You need the sample size, right? Gimme the sample size, I'll get the interviews done. No matter what, at the end of the day you need 3,4,5? I'll get the interviews done, whatever sample size you want from the Dalits. But then I'll not go to the main village. Because if I am going to the main village I'll tell my caste, if they ask. And if you have to bear the consequences of that, then you take care of that, I am not responsible." So that kind of work problem, you know. Or you have to be a Reddy or you've to be a Christian because there were equations. So if you belong to certain castes and certain religions, you have better access, hai na, promotion ke liye. So my.. that fellow was not a ... he was a Reddy, but then he took me in because in the written tests I have given and all, my work was really good, they really liked my work and so they had to take me. He was a Reddy, but he was from a campus background so he would always tell me it would be tough for you, if you reveal your caste. Don't! And he would say it would be easier for.. and he would be so confident of his promotion because he knows that he is Reddy. And he could speak his language. So he would say, "Don't try telling your caste. Yeah, because it'll not help you get anywhere. With the kind of talent you have, if you could

brush down your caste and tell.. give them what they want, they'll take you in anyway. Even more better, tell them you are a Christian, it'll work." So it plays a lot. All this language of no caste being existent doesn't work that way. So meanwhile, in the process of getting into PhD, I have interacted with a range of faculty and all, I have interacted with faculty who otherwise would be.. I mean.. this is a double problem with the educated class you encounter, because they have this burden of helping Dalits. They think they can only, they predominantly think you are not...mere ko reservation mila, that gave me access to better resources, because I never had access to, I was denied an access to those resources. And you are rightfully giving me the access to the right place. You are not..that doesn't mean I am under-performing anywhere. Inko lagta hai you are an under-performer or they are helping you out and they have to do it. It's like the White Man's Burden. So this is.. so the first thing they'll ask is your caste, then they'll ask your cut-off, then only they'll talk to you. And for long, in this conversation, it dwells as if you are here only because you have reservation. It doesn't matter after the course how much you score in the things or how much augmentation you are doing in the class. And they'd have these nuanced words, they'll not use

the word 'caste'. "Haan, tumhara background aisa hai na." So I had this instance. "What do you mean 'tumhara background aisa hai?'" Very sophisticated way of saying it. "Haan, I can understand, your background is Dalit no?" "What is my background, you are talking about my caste?" I don't have a problem, talk it out na. No, I have underperformed or I couldn't do it, because there were other reasons, it's not my background. It could be illness, it could be something else, it could be institution, it could be you who have not given me time. So it's somehow, somehow there's over insistence with caste, knowingly or unknowingly. When you too much say "No, no, there is no caste, there is no caste, no caste", you are actually reinforcing caste in a certain sense. Why don't you accept it and let go? I don't know... I am.. well.. with the kind of aspirations or being part of politics or anything, we always say, caste annihilation is important and all. But then I wonder if we could ever reach there. Because the primary and first thing is to accept caste. You know, you can't even accept that I am from a lower caste and treat equally, when will you get past it? Unless you accept it, when will you reject it? We first have to accept the fact that I am from a different caste and still I am equal to you. Which you will not, perhaps, and it happens.. it happens, you

know, colleges and campus spaces, it's just not about academic thing, it's a life experience. You interact with friends, you make friends. Why is that we end up having friends only of our caste background? Usme bhi aa jaata hai. These are the spaces where you first encounter your first romances, your first love, your first... and it's a huge thing, because these are the things that lay basis for your value system- How do you treat your own women, how do you look at family as an institution, how do you look at children as institution, how are you gonna handle it in the future? Now, somebody is reluctant to come out with you just because of your caste background is a huge thing. And I've had instances where (laughs) this is again upper caste burden, you know, they want to relieve you. So a girl would come out on a date with you because she has never seen a boy, a Dalit boy who is fluent in English and who would come up to you and ask you for a date. I am coming out with you because you are Dalit. Wow! "Mera privilege hai ma.. aa jaa!" See, the caste in older spaces of villages is settled. We confront it only when there is a transgression. Caste becomes a point of conflict only when there is a transgression, like, some girl falls in love with a guy from a different caste or there is a conflict of rituals, or there is some other kind of community overlap. On that day you

confront caste groups in a village. But in urban spaces, it's ambivalent and that's a fucking problem. It is there everywhere. At the moment... because in rural spaces, you accept the fact that, or I mean, not rural spaces, in your familiar regular spaces also, everybody knows it and you are done with the circumstances ki yes yeh mera caste background hai and yeh mere line hai, I can't cross it, behave there. And now you are saying ki yahaan pe kuch nahi hai, so everybody thinks that it's like that movie no? Manjhi.. Manjhi me Nawaz believes there is no caste and he goes hugs somebody and he beats the shit out of him. So it's like that.

We have to tell you, we have to basically tell you that you are actually hurting me. And you think that I am actually just bringing the caste segment in. The problem is that you don't know that you are hurting me. And you are not ready to know it when I am telling you. No, you can't say certain things to me, you can't behave in certain ways with me because it is certain caste position and you are just not ready to take it. When I say it, you think, you actually think that I am bringing in caste. No, I am just saying it is caste, you are not.. you are just blind to it. You have to accept it, the existence of it. So most of these girls and all

you know, now you have to be modern, so you have to be casteless, so that becomes a reason for going out with you. But they won't be ready to take you.. to take it further or take you to certain spaces. It becomes a point of flaunting and all, and you could as well sense that hypocrisy in it. You can't get in terms with it. Am ok being treated bad. Knowing that I am..but then, you can't give me hypocrites and otherwise.

Within castes, within us, there is so much, so much. So it translates into your internal spaces, you need not spell it out every time. So I remember, I remember this one instance where one of my fellow activists has asked, "How many Madigas do you have?" Until that moment, I've never realised how many Madigas we have in our circle. I said "umm.. one". "And have you ever seen him spending money, have you ever actually thought that you have more privileges than him?" And then when I look back, actually within Dalits only there are certain sections you know, it's very multi layered. It's.. it's internal is so hierarchised at every level, you forget to be conscious of it. So religion plays a lot into it. Within muslims, there are sub.. I've seen at least, I mean, I've.. it's been almost 10 years living in university spaces for me, and experiencing these kind of

things, and I've been with friends from different caste groups. It's always tough to accept for them. It's not about getting along without caste, it's more about living together with caste. It's like that. It's not not asking my caste name or not knowing my caste name. It's to accept my caste and live with me normally. I've had friends who would say no no no. Know the whole merit kind of argument that comes in? No no no, arey bhai, ek exam me tum teen maar liyo, agla exam me mein teer maarta hoon. But this was, this exam..it's like that no, who performs on the day of the exam is the hero. So my day was bad, so this particular exam I didn't. So you got a better grade. Doesn't mean I'll not perform the next time right. So most of the times when I don't perform, you say you have merit and I didn't, and most of the other days when I perform better, you don't credit my merit but then you credit my affirmative action. You are getting it no? So when I top, you would say, "Haan easy hua hai, reservation ki wajah se hua hai." And when I don't, you would say, "Yeh log toh waise hi hai, kuch hone waala nahi hai inka.." And even on the day when we do better, you'd say we have taken somebody else's place. And trust me it's gonna be like this for a long time and we've.. I've to be very tough and assertive to endure this, because there are more people, more of my

people who are to be accessing these resources and getting better off in life.

Because you're one idealist who has been told there is no caste, no caste, no caste, but then the first moment you come to campus, the first thing you have to confront is caste, right from the fee structure, reservation me you get low fees because you are from such a background. But then right from the call letter, haan. Then there are already existing groups, existing organisations, then there are..these university spaces are these special bridge programs of English, remedial teaching and all. Ab tum saale itna kharaab naam rakhthe ho, yahaan pe bhi, even in IIT, 'Rehabilitation Centre'. Kya hai, woh 'Academic Rehabilitation Program'. What we are retards or fucking..? No..we are just.. we couldn't do well in some exams, that's it. We are not fucking retards. You can't call it a Rehabilitation Centre. A Remedial Centre. What remedy are you giving to us. And you'd only say Dalit students are there, so it's like telling in advance that you are an under performer, brandize you. Aisa bahut saare kuch hain. It's not...the intention is right, the execution is so bad.

It was very different. In Germany I was carrying myself. I had a formal dress for myself, shoes for myself, I had a watch. It all matters, haan.. It actually matters. I had a decent set of goggles, specs, had eyesight... There was a difference in the way I was presenting myself. It all matters. That is...it's not about having a better education alone. We were looking at... she would.. she would always say, because, she was from a different caste background, my girlfriend, but then, she was from a same class background. So we knew, we had some commonality, you see, it's an ambition for a better life. You eat better, you live better, and you dress better, that ambition for better life, so...

Because apne gaon me apne sarpanch apun ko time nahi deta. They are like that. I'll tell you. One of these applications, a very recent application, I needed to have a Caste Certificate, sorry, an Income Certificate. Now it doesn't say Income Certificate; when your parents are government employees, you don't get an Income Certificate, you get a Salary Certificate. And the clause was, whoever has income lesser than 6 lakhs could apply. And the MDO, the Mandal Development Officer, my mom's superior, who had to sign it, didn't sign it for a

month, and he would say, “Haan meine suna hai, your kids are good at education and all, why don’t you take a VR, a voluntary retirement, and get your son to do?” She is a clerk, and I am doing a PhD and he knows all that and he wants me to pick it up. Basically it is a.. umm.. then she had to confront. “Why are you doing this?” He was reluctant to sign it. “I can’t give you this certificate.” That was out and out because of the caste thing and everybody in the office knew it. He was of the confidence that she is a woman... she is a Dalit, she is a woman, she is a widow, she would not voice out no? He could... So at the end of the day she had to do it, “Why, aren’t you doing it because of the caste?” and she had to press it, and there were some good guys who were like “Sir, aap aisa nahi kar sakte ho.” He had to sign it.

## Rajath Chandrasahas

5 year Integrated M.Sc.

There are few factors, certain factors which still affect them, something like, if they are go... they have to j... they have to decide, they have to join a job right after graduating. They don't have the privilege to say 'Okay, my parents are going to fund me for the education, so let me go and do masters'. So these are the places where reservation is actually important for these people, which, I think, lot of these people from the privileged background don't understand. They just ignore their privilege; they just think 'Okay, this guy just scored um... seventy five percent, sixty percent of my marks and is here'. And something which people don't really understand is they are from, they are from all the brahmin or one of this upward class. They have been... They are the... Actually they are the minority, almost minority, when you take b... brahmins into consideration, but they make upto easily thirty to forty percent of IIT population. So if we remove the... if people want to remove the reservation, that would be eighty percent of all the people from brahmin and other people, the sixty percent of the population or seventy if... if we include o... other upward class too. They will all be

subsidised to the t... that twenty percent. So which is one argument, which I don't like about all the anti-reservation.

In fact we should have more... we should encourage people more in... in educating them, especially when you go to the s... slum areas. I have been to few slum areas myself, like I was curious, just wanted to know. So, there are l... lot of people who don't go to schools and they are just doing um... petty jobs, or selling um... one of the sweet f... sour or any food items on the side of their slum. So I think we... there should be more um... encouragement towards um... all the backward caste people to study. So we need to have um... a uniform identity for all these people. They have to represent um... the country in a... in the percentage of what they are, in proportionately they have to represent the country.

The thing is leaving our prejudice behind and our... like whatever I groundview old moral, I ground people who are from general category, holding that moral I ground 'Okay I did get better rank than him'. Like specially it's common with freshie. My roommate was one of such guy. I don't want to reveal the name. So... I had many roommates, thankfully. So, yeah, they hold this moral

iground I am from thisss... um... um... whatever the... I am from... I had this rank... Or they will be all those cash paid... I'm proud...xyz. So, this is actually casteism, but... Yeah, it's fine. Like people don't realise. It's all inherent. They think 'Okay, my... someone, my uncle is going on protest saying I'm proud, xyz, kshatriya, so it's alright for me to do it. But that places subtle um... um... role in um... other backward caste minds saying 'Okay, I am not from a good family, I should hide my caste or I should not tell who I am, they'll probably judge me. So t... people should leave that. I was in first year. People used... still used to make fun using all the homophobic words... And they were homophobic, as homophobic as they can get. But right now I don't see anyone making that in public. They are all supportive of... of all the minority. They are also minority, minority in the campus.

Generally the problem with the reservation candidates are... They find it hard to cope up in the first year, first or second year, because they are new to insti and they don't know english. So these people find it really hard to cope up in first year but, as I'm known... as I've seen people, they bounce back very g... very well like if you see the contrast between their performance in first and second

year, that's always better so... For them... I think there should be some training for um... or institute. I know that they are organising it with student mentorship programme, the english classes, but institute has to have a common course for engl... english probably in the first year. I think it's much better having that instead of BB101 or HS101 in our first year. We can probably have two semestered course worth of english. People can attend it. It's not compulsory w... having compulsion over all these people 'attend these classes'. Peo... If someone is comfortable, he can clear it without much problem. Let others learn through this thing, like someone... They can get good english teacher who could explain people who are from um... other language background. So I think that would probably help. If not, I don't see much of a problem, like it's k... kind of like... and people who are um... failing in lot of c... courses it's actually like a downward spiral. So w... we don't treat the problem in the base... base or you can say up, because it's a downward spiral. So we don't treat the problem in first year or we don't... people don't encourage. They don't seek out for councillors. So that is where they go wrong and they start thinking that 'Okay, something is wrong with me, something is wrong w... People don't treat me well. Th...

P... ' It is there but still, like they go into depression or, it just keeps going down. I... If we can make primary education well, I don't think we'll have to even worry, say that 'Oh reservation category people are like sixty percent or seventy percent of my marks'. You can make it n... eighty percent. I do... I think in one of the state the OBC mark cut-off is much higher than... or is just close to this thing. So, you can say that o... okay that um... espe... the OBC in that place is not as bad as what it generally is outside. So again OBC is a different background, so...

Oh yeah, so people use um... there are such abuses in um... casteist word. One of them is 'chamaar'. It's a ca... backward caste and 'bhobde' I think so. I don't know. These are all backward caste which people use. People don't really realise, like I don't know if they realise it or not b... this is basically making fun of someone, saying that you are from backward class. If people don't do this, I think it is a much better appreciation. Okay, I remember one incident. So, we were in um... so this was by athletics coach. So it was my very first year. We... I was in NSO Athletics. So we were taking attendance, so some guy with Meena surname was late. So this b... athletics coach um... in front of everyone. So we were all sitting. We were all

first year students, when people are like maximum judgemental state. So this guy is like 'um... Meena um... this is at... attendance is not like your reservation. You can't come late and um... get attendance'. This is what they told in front of everyone. So I don't know how he felt. So, that is... that was super rude. I don't... I didn't understand pe... there were people who laughed at it. So, I didn't feel it was rude, but now I realise, okay, that was actually very rude for a... someone in working here, who is a sports coach, to say that.

Privilege or the higher caste that 'okay, we can make fun of them in such ways and get away with that', but no, it does hurt... affect lot of people, specially when someone is in teenage, when... I don't it's anyone's problem that they are here because of reservation. Even um... like, no one, if they... anyone had an option, they would not be born in lower caste. They are not like 'okay, let me come from under-privilege, let me be a s... slumdog millionaire and let me make my way up.' No, everyone would like to come in a privileged background. They don't want to be from an under-privileged background and move to it. It's

not their problem. They were choose um... they choose to be born in lower caste. But when people a... just take advantage of it and make fun of it, I think it's really bad, which I think insti should change. I hope the future generation at least does, but looking at all the anti-reservation which a... whenever I see on facebook, I don't think there are... we had progressing, but not in a faster pace. People should understand. If not, all the sociology, psychology, every HSS course is useless for um... making it compulsory in insti.

I don't say education, but yeah, social science... I think which insti is doing a good job. I don't know if they were forced to do it or a... their... it was their um... moral conscience saying 'Okay, let's have us a... HSS, Humanity Science education to people. So I think we can probably make those things compulsory. I think that's makes a stand out from um... every other college because we are from IIT which we do require for s... um... definitely when you are going to any different field, you should know the sociological difference or someone... There are very good courses on religion also; how religion is against um... has been oppressing women and others um... lower caste for long time. So if people can take up this, or if you

can probably touch up on these things, people do realise where they are coming from. So it's not right to just assume 'Okay, my religion is, or my wa... my... not religion, I would say my p... parents say this is true. My... I read it on facebook post saying, okay, this is what happening, so this has to be true. We read the...

Actually pro... professors need this the most, because they um... come from a different generation. So, it reminds me of an incident, so I had been there... There was an Insight Open House based on women safety I think. So the amount of inherent sexism in that was so high, I was just worried 'Are we really having Open House on women's safety?' And there were f... especially the security guards, they were all s... saying 'Okay, peop... women should behave themselves. I d... o... I... I'm sure the insti does not make these recordings available or make it known. People don't get the hold of this but there was so much sexism in that, then there was lot of rebuttal by people.

But yeah, as long as you are not um... disturbing someone else, so um... let him do whatever it is. So yeah, people should stop getting, spreading hatred on facebook, which

is actually less in insti right now, or I've become... I've reached fourth year and people are busy with their life, not staying on facebook. But my freshie year, there used to be so much hate, specially we even start with all the hostel wars with... all dirty rights. I can't say they were... So all the abuses... So I hope this thing stops. So yeah, be polite to others.

Different things like people are sadistic. They find pleasure in breaking things. It's kind of, like venting out your anger, so that's stress buster. Someone uses it's fidget spinner and you just break props. So, that works for them. Not...

Bec... Because... So it was during our Ganesh Chaturthi I think, so people had a problem with it. So they had a idol in the um... this thing, in the mess, instead of inside the TV room. So they had problem with serving non-veg or anything. So... I think this should not be a problem. If you knew that there will be eggs served every morning, and everyone believes that every um... you should have at least one egg per day. So I go to... I run or I go cycle, so I can't start my day without having eggs. So there was so much problem caused by lot of people saying 'No, don't

eat eggs. Don't um... get chicken'. So i agree with chicken not being there, but I think people will have a problem with having eggs in their food, and I'm s... sure that there are many v... like, I do see... keep seeing all these things as people asking for vegetarian mess and all. So... yeah, if people have a... Be supportive of others, other people's food habits. Don't say that 'No, don't eat egg because so... I have some festival going on. Pl... Banthat egg please'. So yeah, there are people follow food habits, so it's like coming to India, some foreigner invading, or you go to America and asking people, everyone 'No, I have a festival right now, so don't eat beef, steak or don't eat any ve... vegetarian. This is my mess now.' So we... we are a c... community, we are collective of all the people and most of them are non-vegetarians, so th... it should not cause problem to m...

I know stories from my grandmom's village where they don't give the plate to a um... people, workers, who are generally Dalit. So they don't give them plates. They used to give um... coconut shells for... They used to give food in that so that they can just dispose it. Or someone if our... background, backward caste person, Dalit comes to the room , they used to wash it completely. Or they just

take bath after meeting someone. So... I have heard stories about my family being so... so much against... not against the... so much for untouchability. So I think, yeah, this is something which people should do. So we have to be more inclusive society. We c... The outside um... campus takes time, but I think campus should start doing this.

But India, I think, we are more racist than m... America. We don't want to agree upon that, so... but we are b... racist, casteist, casteist, all of them. We are all inherent ca... casteism which we keep showing everywhere.

## Shubham Chauhan

B.Tech., Aerospace Engineering

I am an Aerospace student, fourth year student, passing out this year, in 2017, with a minor in Business. This was the academic thing. Before that, I come from a very conservative background from Uttar Pradesh. My parents used to live in a village called Thakurdwara near Delhi. When my dad got a job in military, we kind of moved to different different places all the time when I was growing up. I didn't have the opportunity to live in Uttar Pradesh very much. But I know the scenario, kind of background people come with. I am a Chauhan, an Uttar Pradesh Chauhan which are like Rajputs. Rajputs are regarded as the higher class from North India. I don't really have some stories from IIT Bombay where I was bashing other class or something else, because I don't really have that kind of hierarchy in my mind where you put everything in terms of caste. I have different kind of hierarchy but it's not based on caste. It's probably prominently based on money or anything else.

Then, something like, whenever they used to go out, they used to create relations. So business is mostly based on

networks when you are just entering into a business, where there are already many fishes around and you are just trying to catch another thing. So there, they used to create these networks and those networks were majorly based on the caste system. So, when i say, "Papa, woh kaun hai?", he used to be like, "Accha, woh bhi ek Chauhan hai. Itne time se yahan pe yeh kaam kar rahen hain and I think he can probably help us. Whenever you go to an area of Uttar Pradesh, and you want to tell them that "Accha, this is the thing that I want you to do" and before you know that guy says a Yes or No, you tell them your caste,"Yes i am a Rajput and the word that gets out of my mouth is the final word." This is the kind of thing I am talking about.

Friends circle, quite a good friends circle over here within IIT Bombay. Some of the time when we are sitting and.. so my brother is doing preparation for JEE, as of now, he was doing quite well and he didn't perform that good in JEE, mostly he'll be getting a decent rank but not that good a rank. So we were discussing a few days back ki what kind of system we have in our entrance. Then this topic of reservation came into the picture. And I was kind of shocked when everyone around me started saying ki "Accha yaar, reservation is too bad a thing to happen, it is

degrading the whole quality of the IITians...” There is a disparity between the castes that are getting into IIT Bombay, based on what- they are paying less fees and this guy is paying more fees. That’s it. This was the kind of argument that we as a circle were having few days back.

People who had taken Sociology in their third year, they kind of had a different perspective. They had read quite a bit about the letters that were submitted by B.R.Ambedkar and those letters were quite influencing. I had also read this letters later, not the whole part, but somethings. Before that also, we had this beef waala.. so again, when the discussion was down to caste, we also discussed about cow eating and non-veg thing. In North India we most of the time see that the people who are from SC/ST and OBC are the people who are generally non-veg. The upper caste people tend to say we are Brahmins and these are the pure veg people. So why is it like that? We were diving into history and all. So there was another sociology document that we had found from the course. It says that, probably you know this already, it says that initially these Bodh people used to eat beef.

When I was preparing for JEE in 12th class, I didn’t do quite well, I got a bad rank. So we 5-6 people used to study together. Two of them also got the same rank as I had got, it was a difference of 200 or 300. Other guy was from reservation. He got a good branch and good college and I didn’t really get any good college, I got BHU. So I was like, WTF! I told him about it also. I told him “Yaar saath me yeh saara hua but you are going to this thing.. matlab..aisa kaise yaar.. mein toh yahaan se choot gaya. Ab kya yoga aage?” So there is this competition all the time, when you are studying together, when this competition was there, obviously you were performing better but you are not getting the same thing that the other guy is getting. So I told him “Yaar, aisa kaise..” matlab my behaviour was not changed, he was still my friend, we are still friends, there is nothing different in that. But I told him how I was feeling, ki “Aisa hai, mere ko pata nahi tha, I didn’t quite know about this reservation thing also happens in IIT Bombay. Because I had known this factor from the proportions that happen in Government organisations. It’s also based on caste, reservation is there. But when it struck me, I thought of it like “Accha yeh toh galat cheese hai. Aisa nahi hona chahiye. Married system and all.

So I was reading this Behavioural Economics for sometime and am not a master of it.. So I have this notion from that subject.. It's that ki.. so the lower caste people used to do all the hand jobs, used to work as whatever was commanded by the king or someone, they used to do all the man work in the society. And this is the same thing that has been carried forward from the past. The organisations are there, you have the employees, and then there is this parallel economy running, who are actually the brick and foundation of the whole economy. There is this lower caste people who are working everywhere. I cannot deny the presence of this kind of scenario because I have seen people who are the labourers and I have seen this other people doing peon waala work and everything. If you look at the major part and look at the economy from an upper point, you see these guys are still working over there. Why don't they need the reservation? I can say the path that we have carried till IIT Bombay and later also, it's a different path where you really don't get to interact with the other world. If you look at the other world, you do really see the importance of reservation and I don't really know how much it's affecting them but reservation has to be there for that party.

When you are going outside IIT Bombay, and you end up being in an upper caste, yeah there is no denial in that, we are the knowledge workers basically. We are not the manpower workers, we are the knowledge workers and we are also working for someone else which is above us. They are the higher class I would say, which you get to be after you have an experience of 20-25 years but still...

So we were discussing how we can change the service sector, how we can get people to pay these plumbers and electricians, more than they are getting paid now, because it's not valued, right? Whatever the skill.. you know.. even if we have studied from IIT Bombay, you cannot do the fucking job of security person or watchman standing outside a building, right? We're not skilled enough for that. We cannot even fix a single tap, right? So those guys also have a value in economy, but they are not getting that value. Why? Maybe because Indian economy is small and so that's why they are valued less but there has to be a change in the viewpoint so that we can value their skills and the labour that they do, at a higher level. That would be win-win situation for both, for them also and for the corporate who is running them. For that, it's more about the empowerment. So how do you do the empowerment?

You just change the whole thing. The first thing the guy sees, it's not the caste, it's how you appear, right? So we try to give them different new coats, with the logo and all, and you call them champ, you don't call them plumber, you don't call them electrician, you call them champ. So that's how you change the scenario and the mindset of the people. The change doesn't happen instantly. So in your home, when your mom is calling a champ, she maybe carrying the same mindset but the children are hearing champ as of now, so ten years later when they go to a plumber, they have this notion of champ in their mind. So this change, you can drive this change in 5-6 years, it's not a big thing.

So most of the time if I look at my friends and judge them based on their caste, 50-60% of the people belong to lower caste. 40% are from general category, I am not saying upper caste, but yeah..general category and non-general category, let's say. Non-general category people are also my friends and I haven't had any kind of incident where they had to feel bad about it or I had to feel bad about something or I had made them feel bad, wait, in IIT Bombay, no.

When you are in U.P area, you get, there's a good network built of upper caste over there. So if you belong to let's say I'm Chauhan, then others are like "Accha you are Chauhan, Chauhans have already built a good ecosystem there, you can easily get absorbed into it and do something." And if you say you are Varma or something, or any caste, if you say you are not Chauhan or maybe, not Rajput, then you'll not get absorbed into that system. There is a huge difference I mean, once you have established an ecosystem based on anything, it can be caste, once that good network and ecosystem has been built right, it's very hard to penetrate that ecosystem, not having the value systems that those guys carry. Same happens with caste, same happens with technology, same happens with any other ecosystem that anyone has built till now.

So one of my friends is from..can I take names? Yeah, Ankit Sharma is there. He has a girlfriend Payal Parnami, who is from SC/ST caste I guess. So there is no problem in that. They have been in relationship since last three years I guess, I don't know if they'd be having any problem in the future also. Among themselves they may be talking about caste because if they are looking at the long term

thing, then they have to. Both of them are from Rajasthan and I have also lived in Rajasthan for quite some long time. So even if the both the parties are ready, the society will be very bad.

Seven of us sat, in our batch tried to look at everyone, reservation, non-reservation and what is that CPI. It turned out that people who came here from reservation, they do quite average. I am not saying they do bad, they do quite average, 7-7.5.. in Aerospace department. And the people who are repeaters, they also do quite average, they are not like very exceptional people, and the people who are from general category and come here for the first time in their first attempt, they do quite well. This is the general statistics that we saw, this year and last year also. I mean, two batches we had compared. Based on that if I try to form an opinion, I would say if a person is dedicated in IIT Bombay, even the caste or whatever background the guy has, academics is not going to distinguish among you. You can do better also. I have seen people from reservation class also have done 8-8.5 also. Because academics is not like very intellectual or something. Academics is more involving, you have to put in some time and effort, but not very intellectual.

I was trying very hard to maintain 7, because below 7 what happens is that, even if you are 6.9, they are like, this is 6 pointer. So I'll tell you, I didn't quite study at all in IIT Bombay. I was just barely making it through. My real focus was on business. My main focus was on minor actually, the entrepreneurship minor and the startup. That's the two things. And in startup also like, I was quite focussed on the technology part, I like to learn new technology, new markets, and applying those technology into the markets. If my father couldn't have been enterprising, I wouldn't have known how it is like to run a business. Although he is in military, he runs a business. Wherever he goes, he starts a new business. When he gets posted to a different place, my mom runs the whole thing. Yeah he is an officer. So the thing is from my background if I see, I know that thing, that's why I am doing this thing. So maybe yes.

The decision that she had to make, again, like when we were in Madhya Pradesh, my father was posted in Jammu. She said, "Abhi bacchon ka 10th complete ho gaya hai.." in 2006 he had already said that I want this guy to prepare for IIT-JEE. So she was like "I am going to Kota, Rajasthan, I'll shift the home over there, we'll live over

there, complete the next secondary education.” So we moved to Kota. My father didn’t even help us to move and everything. It was me and my young brother, five years younger to me, and my mom. So she told her sister also, my mausi, that there is good education over there, so bring your children over here. All the children who are here in 10th class are coming to Kota and studying with her, living with her, with my mom. My mausi hasn’t come, only sent her children. She is like, if you want your children to study at a good place, send them over, I’ll take care of them. So from my perspective, the society is kind of evolving, I don’t know if it is the right word or not, evolving into a more meritocratic society. It’s happening in the first world, I don’t know how far we are from...it’s kind of pretending that we are there... and hence we need to get into the meritocratic system from now on, even though we don’t have the infrastructure, we don’t have that mindset, we don’t have the actual social capital that we need to invest in such kind of stuff. But still, there is a section getting into that also. There are going to be classes in the future also, there’ll be new kind of classes. The western society already has their standard of living waala class system. So how are we going to put a new class system into the picture?

If we are able to allocate resources in a different manner, so the rituals and traditions are trying to change your lifestyle in a manner which increases or enhances your chances of survival or maybe doing good into the society. And those chances are based on resources. It all comes down to how you are getting those resources that are needed for your society, and the way you are getting those resources. Where those resources are and how you are getting them. So if you are able to disrupt that allocation and accessibility of those resources, then basically you have disrupted the whole social system. And the moment it gets disrupted, now they are thinking, accha we used to do this, just because to get water, and this thing seems all shitty, because we are getting water from here now, we don’t have to do the rain dance, right?

## Aakash Wallania

B.Tech., Mechanical Engineering

PAF is God! PAF, the biggest festival of our IIT. PAF has dramatics, dance and a lot of other events. I like dramatics a lot, be it any theatre, any drama, it always makes me feel good.

There is this whole enthusiasm about wanting to perform in dramatics. Most of the things you do get boring after a while, but in dramatics you always get a chance to play a whole new character every time.

I want to be famous, I want people to recognise me, because I come from a place that most people haven't even heard of; a very small village, a small village where people are uneducated. Here, I have a very good opportunity to become famous. People will then know about this small place that I come from.

I first studied hard, then got into IIT, and after coming here, I got so many opportunities that I realised that I could become anything that I want. I have got a very good platform here, I don't think I can get any better chance of becoming famous than this.

I purely believe in trying hard, nobody becomes Shahrukh Khan in a jiffy. I always try hard to do something new, everyone studies here, but it's also necessary to do something different.

We secured the first place this year in PAF, I felt extremely happy. I had only a small part to play, but it felt really good. It didn't matter to me if people saw me or not, but just the whole aspect of performing in PAF brought me joy. You can't keep yourself happy if you try pleasing everybody or if you try fulfilling everyone's wishes all the time. You just have to immerse yourself in whatever role is given to you. I am still learning. Seniors guide us a lot in getting these things done right.

Acting gives me this whole new feeling from deep inside, that I play a different character everyday- I was a vegetable seller yesterday, today I am a waiter, tomorrow I may play a rich man. No role is small, I started off playing the role of a waiter in my first play, then a vegetable seller, then a family member, and after performing in three plays itself I got the lead role. Then I was a hotel owner, and now PAF happened. The freshers were given the meatier roles, we

seniors took up small roles, taking more time off to teach the newcomers.

You get bored of the usual monotony and deadlines, but acting is fun. You get a chance to try out new outfits, you visit new places. We'll hopefully be putting up a play outside of IIT, sometime in August.

I did my schooling till 10th standard in my village, I had no clue about IITs back then. People run behind Government jobs there- they study and get into clerical jobs in Banks, take up UPSC exams, enrol themselves in the army, etc. I had no clue what to do with my life, people around me were clerks, going about their same monotonous routine everyday. They get their salaries, yes, but money is not everything, we need to enjoy life also once in a while. After 10th standard, I used to go for tuitions outside my village. Naseem sir was my tutor, he had a huge hand in shaping my life. Every time I get to go back home now, I meet him. I was his favourite student, I was the topper in my school, all the way from 6th to 12th standard. Naseem sir was my maths teacher. He would always guide everybody in everything, advising them on what to do. So I got a little annoyed and jealous once and

asked him who his favourite student was. He told that I was his favourite. I then asked him why he never told me what to do with my life, but went about being cool and friendly and guiding all the other 20-50 boys in the class. Sir told me that I was clearly made for IIT. That was the first time I had heard about IIT. He told me everything that he knew about IIT. I didn't get much of it then, all I did understand was that you get paid a lot once you graduate from IIT. That's when I decided that I must go to IIT only, because I wanted to earn a lot of money. My village is very backward in terms of education. We don't have proper education there; I am the first student to pass 12th standard exams in science stream. People mostly study arts there, they take up Sanskrit, not even English.

I worked really hard to study and cleared my 12th standard exams from U.P state board with good marks. I wanted to study further, I talked to my family about it. I wanted to pursue a degree in B.Tech. I wrote entrance exams for IIT, AMU, BHU and other universities but didn't get selected anywhere initially, so I gave up and started pursuing BSc. After three months, it got very monotonous, so I dropped out and joined a small coaching centre named UP2 in Moradabad. But then I realised the

coaching there wasn't meant for IIT, I saw only a few questions marked as IIT questions in some of these UP board textbooks. In fact, I came to know of NCERT only after coming to IIT Bombay! So yeah, I was getting coached only at the UP state level, that too in Hindi medium. I worked really hard though, I got the concepts right. But that wasn't good enough for IIT right away, so I tried again and ultimately, I did clear JEE. I was eligible for IIT Bombay, Delhi, Roorkee; IIT Bombay was my first choice. I also got calls from NIT Allahabad and some of the best universities of U.P even offering me a seat in Computer Science stream. But Mumbai is Mumbai, doesn't matter which department you get into. But I was lucky enough to get into Mechanical department. Then I met Naseem sir and told him of my accomplishment. He said right away, "See, I had told you back then itself that you were made for IIT!"

Initially it was difficult for me here. I came from a Hindi medium background. I didn't know English at all, I still can't speak English well. Everything here was in English. I used to get angry a lot, but soon I met other people from Hindi medium- from Rajasthan board, Bihar board, etc. They gave me a lot of solace. There were also toppers

from CBSE and ICSE boards who helped me a lot. They never made me feel low and helped a lot in studies, irrespective of the communication problem. Initially, in the first semester, I was performing very bad academically, I never understood what to do with my life, I was beginning to give up. We used to sit with dictionaries, trying to understand meanings of the English terms used in class. I was even considering dropping out of IIT, but then I told myself that I had worked real hard to get this far, English is just one subject, I shouldn't be leaving IIT because of that. People started teaching me English and I started improving. Now that I am in the third year, I don't face much issues, but I still can't speak fluently in English. I can speak Hindi very well. One needs to know at least one language extremely well, and I trust myself with Hindi and I take pride in it. I can just about manage to get things done with the English that I speak.

Initially I wasn't doing well in academics, but at the same time, I got accustomed to this whole new facility of internet- youtube, Facebook etc. I created my Facebook account after coming to IIT. I had no idea on how to go about it but I just started off and slowly chats happened,

sometimes with girls also, and it felt really good. I used to waste a lot of time on youtube and Facebook and then fret over exams in the last moment. But yeah, I somehow managed to get through every time, and slowly the internet addiction also reduced. College facilities wise, IIT seems to be the best. The private colleges make you pay a huge sum and still don't give you such facilities. IIT has every facility in terms of academics, sports and performing arts. The people here in IIT are also extremely nice and helpful. The place where I come from, people are generally quite rude to each other, they don't work much but then get jealous of people who outshine them. I didn't want to be like them or do the same things that they do, that's why I worked hard to come to IIT. Even within IIT, I wanted to do something different, so I chose theatre. I am not sure whether I'll succeed in this field, but then it's our right to try things out.

Now I'll be a senior from April onwards, a final year student. I have learnt a lot of life lessons here. Irrespective of whether I get placed or not, I sure have learnt how to live my life. I have learnt that nothing works out if you stay naive, you shouldn't be very rude to people, but at the same time, if you see someone being rude, you should not

remain a silent spectator. I am sure I won't get beaten up or let people take advantage of me. Most IITians here are not only good with academics, they perform exceptionally well in extra curricular activities too and bring laurels to our college.

I want to earn just enough money to start an English medium school in my village. We have only Hindi medium schools there, the ones that provide mid-day meals, I studied in one such school and it was very tough for me. I just consider myself lucky that I got into IIT Bombay, I didn't think I was worthy of it back then. I just want to have a good school facility in my village within the next 5-10 years. Children just study till 12th standard there and end up staying in the same village, they have no exposure whatsoever. I want them to study hard, come into the outer world and realise the magnitude of competition out here. I don't think education is everything in life, I do see some students here who get anxious and really stressed over grade points. I am just happy with whatever I get. There has to be some contentment in life.

It feels nice when you get to hear that someone from your locality has achieved something. But there isn't anyone

from my village about whom I can talk like that, not yet. So I want to apply the things that I learnt here and pitch in some money also to help people from my village get a chance to come out and experience the outside world. I want my people to stand by and help me in this endeavour, participating in it for a better future for their children.

I have visited a lot of places over the last three years. I see kids playing sports in huge grounds with great facilities, yeah, they may not excel in that field, but at least they have been exposed to such facilities early in their lives. I want the kids in my village also to get access to the basics of sports, theatre and English early in their school life.

I still meet my sir every time I go home, he lives only 3 km away from my village. I always tell him about my life in IIT and he is really happy about how I am enjoying my life here. I'll forever have respect for him, my guru, and my parents.

I was earlier concentrating only on earning a lot of money, but after coming to IIT, my whole perspective about life has changed. Now I am not worried about making money, there is no fear, nor hurry for earning money. Everyone in

IIT ultimately learns how to manage to earn money. I have my placement in December, let's see, let's cross the bridge when we get there.

## Sunganna Velpula

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I am Sunganna Velpula, Dr.Sunganna, working as a post-doc fellow in IIT Bombay. I have completed my PhD from Hyderabad Central University and then immediately I've come here as a post-doc. So, when we talk about merit and the importance of merit, then first of all, you have to talk about the social status of different castes and communities and even religions also. Why there are certain castes, economically and socially suppressed for centuries and centuries and why there are some other castes, I can call them as dominant, privileged classes, having so much of socio-political, economic and religious highness in their lives. The thing is that if anybody wants to talk about the merit, then first of all, they have to talk about the economic and social standards of the individuals as well as the community based. If you take community based social hierarchies in society, especially Dalit communities, the communities which were treated as Untouchables in Hindu society for more than two thousand years in India. They are economically, socially, even politically suppressed. In earlier stage, they were not

even having the right to have a property. And for centuries, they were kept away from the village. Even today if you go to a village, every village will be having a Ghetto. Ghetto is a thing that... a Dalit colony, the Untouchables colony, away from the main village. Why they were kept away from the village, why they were not allowed to walk, to interact with the people in the main village and why their mere touch or their mere presence caused the other castes, the Hindu castes... pollutes, that is the main thing. It is not just a social issue. It is fundamentally a religious issue. I believe that as long as this Hindu religious culture and tradition sustain on this land, it'll be very difficult to remove the social hierarchies and caste based discriminations, and even bringing equal status among the people. It is very difficult. If you go back to my childhood days... There was a government school and the school was built by the government, the teachers were appointed by the government, but Dalits were not allowed to study in that school. Then I decided to leave that place, I just took 100 rupees from my father's pocket, I stole it, then I ran away from my home. I ran away from home, and I worked in hotels, I worked in tea shops, I worked in bars and restaurants, and finally for one year I worked as a lorry cleaner. For two years my parents were

searching for me and they couldn't find me at all. For two years I was in Hyderabad, I was working as a lorry cleaner. Finally one day my father found me in Hyderabad. He said that you passed 10th standard. If you'd been there, then you would have completed your +2. So I'll not take you forcefully because I cannot keep my eyes on you all the time, where you are going.. and so, if you are interested to go to college and to continue your studies, then come with me. Okay if I'd have said I wouldn't come, my father would have taken me forcefully, because he was searching for me for two years. But he wanted to guide me very smoothly, that you have passed, you have a chance to go to college, to continue studies, then I said I'll go. Then after two years gap, I went to my village, I joined. These two years of my life experience, working in canteens, cleaning someone's eaten plate, cleaning someone's coffee, tea cups and working for one year cleaning lorries and other things, really taught me a lot, that really made my life to turn a different change, to take a different change, then I started my Intermediate. I never looked back, and I've continued my studies. I passed my 10th standard with 40% marks, I passed my intermediate with 46% marks. Then I completed my B.A. with 53% marks, and I completed my B.Ed. teacher training with 56%. Then I

wanted to become a teacher, I was appearing for teacher recruitments, one year I was going for coaching.

He asked me, "Brother, who are you?" I said, "I am Sunganna, I am from Karnool district, Andhra Pradesh." He said, "Oh okay, what is your education qualification?" I said that I completed my B.A. and B.Ed. and I came here for a job and unexpectedly I moved into film industry. Then he asked me, "After having a B.A. B.Ed., how can you work in a stupid industry called Film industry, which not at all suits you and your education. The Film industry is only for people who fail Intermediate, 10th class and degree, who can't do anything else will go to Film industry and become something."

Then that man who was doing PhD. in Hyderabad University, Jilakara Srinivas, he asked me directly, "Brother, which caste do you belong to?" I said that I belong to Mala community, one caste among other Dalit communities. Then he hugged me and said that you also belong to my community, so, do you want to go for higher education? I said that I am interested. He asked me what I wanted to do. I said that I wanted to do Psychology. If at

all I want to do PG, then I'll do psychology. There was a reason for psychology, because I had been observing people, a lot.

I was getting very less marks, like out of 100, some 20 or 10 marks. Because the primary education, I didn't get it. Not only me, all my village people were getting the same marks. But later I myself realised the importance of education, I wanted to move ahead. So my 10th standard was 40%, Inter 46%, degree 53%, B.Ed. 56%, M.A. 62%, MPhil 72% and PhD, distinction. My graph never fell down. It was moving up only.

Why the school was restricted for non-Dalits, and why Dalits were denied? This is the hierarchy from the government. Why government could not take a severe action to implement that both the Dalit and the non-Dalit will sit together and have their education? It is the failure of the government system that really caused the suppression of the Dalit students. And another thing is that reservation was not given on economic basis. These days, the meritorious students and the parents of the meritorious students are talking that there are many people in Brahmin community, in upper class community,

economically so poor and they are not getting reservation but in Dalit community, there are some people who are rich, their parents are government employees, but still they are getting the reservation and enjoying the reservation fruits. But my answer to them is that the reservation was not given on economic basis. The reservation was given on social standards. When the reservation was given, at that time, Dalits were not even allowed to enter into the school. So to enrol the Dalits and other marginalised and suppressed people in a school, the reservation was implemented. To encourage them, the reservation was implemented. Since 2000 years of history shows that the whole community was kept away from education, kept away from development, kept away from society, so to bring them back to education, to bring them into the society, to bring the change in their social life, the reservation was given, not on the basis of economics or not on the basis of the individual's economy. Okay, if reservation is only based on economic grounds, as the meritorious students and their parents are talking about, then why the elite communities, especially from the Dalits, who are economically strong, and whose parents are government employees, why those people, though they were having economically equal status, why they are not

getting socially equal status with other Hindu castes? They have to answer this question. As long as an equal status in the society, an individual fails to get, then the social hierarchy is prevailing there, caste based hierarchy is prevailing there, religion based hierarchy is prevailing there. If once an individual gets a social equality, a socially equal position, then reservation is not a big task to show their capacity and capability.

I've been here.. this is my eighth month in IIT Bombay. I have seen people and am observing in my day to day life. IIT Bombay students, even the faculty members, are blind about caste, are blind about caste based reservations or even blind about the suppression the Dalit community is facing for the past 2000 years. They fail to recognise how the caste based hierarchy suppressed them.

The truth is that once they appear for entrance exams in IITs, they prove themselves, and based on their ranks, they get their seats in IITs. If their name is listed in IIT Bombay or IIT Madras or IIT Delhi or any other IIT, it means that other than the Dalit communities, other than the many other Hindu caste communities, these people who are coming in reservation, they performed well and

their name is listed to get admission in IITs. It means they are eligible to get their education from IITs. But after coming to IITs, many dropouts, many suicides are happening. The only thing is that the IITs, even the universities in India, they have failed to provide a platform for these suppressed communities to prove themselves, that, okay, we have given entrance exam, we have given our interview and we have proved ourselves that we are eligible to study in these institutions, and after coming here, the institution failed to provide them a platform to prove themselves. How they failed? In a normal conversation, in a classroom, the caste Hindu students will always poke the Dalit and tribal students, "Oh okay, you are coming from the reservation.. Oh you reservation people, even if you go and sleep nicely in the hostel, no problem, you'll be getting the degree. Even if you don't perform better than the other people, you'll be getting fellowships and scholarships and based on reservation, you can complete your education without any struggle." If a meritorious student, if a caste Hindu student fails to perform what the teacher is expecting, then the teacher very nicely motivates them to perform better, guides them to perform better and to prove themselves as better. But if a Dalit student, or a tribal student, or if any other

suppressed community student failed to perform their task in the classroom, in the classroom itself, in front of all the students, the teacher will dare to say that you are coming from the reservation, so it's okay for you. You all people through reservation come to the classroom and waste our time. Suppose, sitting here in IIT Bombay, If you say a single word against the administration, by taking any reservation issue, by taking any classroom issue, if you protest without informing the administration, the next moment, you'd be kicked out from IIT Bombay or any other IITs. So, this platform is not even providing a space to express what you want to express. So the education system is going in the wrong direction.

My grandfather worked as village Sarpanch for 16 years. My village Sarpanch for 16 years was my grandfather. Though my grandfather was a village Sarpanch, I never got an equal status along with the other Hindu caste students. I was not allowed to recruit my name in the government school which was only particularly built for the non-Dalits. Though my grandfather was also an authoritative person, the whole village, including the school was in his area of control, but still, I did not get a chance to study there. My grandfather's 16 years of village

Sarpanch capacity could not bring me equal status to enter into the Hindu's temple. So here, economic status is not at all a criterion to have the reservations. Even when the British government introduced the convents in the Indian society, the so called upper caste, the Hindu castes failed to perform with the Britishers in education. Then, the Indians at that time who were studying in British convents, mostly 100% they were the upper castes, they went to the British government, they appealed to the British government, "We failed to perform with the Britishers, so we need some excuse to perform better." Then, in British education system, there was only First Class or Fail. But, to promote Indian students, especially the upper caste students in British education system, the British government introduced Second Class, then later Third Class was also introduced. So it was the upper caste who requested the British government to introduce the second class, to pass the exam and to get promotion into higher studies. It was not the Dalits.