

Ideology, Cinema, and Institutional Violence in Indian Legal Narratives: Theoretical and Empirical Context

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Abstract:

Popular Indian cinema increasingly critiques the persistence of caste discrimination within a constitutionally egalitarian republic. Addressing the lack of comparative analyses across regional industries, this paper examines Hindi film *Article 15* (2019, directed by Anubhav Sinha) and Tamil film *Jai Bhim* (2021, directed by T. J. Gnanavel) to interrogate the ideological mechanism of caste-based policing. The objective is to analyse how both films represent the differential treatment of Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) victims and accused within the law enforcement machinery. Employing a qualitative close-textual methodology, the study evaluates narrative structure, character arcs, and cinematographic elements like framing, mise-en-scène, sound, and symbolism, anchored in documented incidents of caste violence and secondary scholarship. Theoretically, the paper applies Raymond Williams's cultural materialism and Louis Althusser's concepts of Ideological and Repressive State Apparatuses (ISA/RSA) and interpellation to unpack how state institutions reproduce caste hierarchy through consent and coercion. Comparative findings reveal that while both films depict police as sites where colonial-era caste prejudice is interpellated into contemporary institutional practice, their narrative resolutions diverge sharply: *Article 15* explores an upper-caste saviour navigating his own institutional interpellation, whereas *Jai Bhim* foregrounds Dalit and Adivasi agency mediated through Ambedkarite legal advocacy. Ultimately, this paper contributes to comparative Indian film studies by demonstrating how Althusserian and cultural-materialist frameworks illuminate the cinematic construction of caste injustice across linguistic contexts, while highlighting the ideological limitations of savarna-authored narratives of Dalit liberation.

Keywords: Caste, Cultural Materialism, Louis Althusser, Ideological State Apparatus, Indian Cinema, Criminal Justice.

1. Introduction

Storytelling has long served as one of humanity's most enduring means of interpreting social reality, preserving collective memory, and challenging structures of power. Across civilisations, oral narratives, folklore, and dramatic traditions have enabled societies to articulate shared anxieties, contest dominant ideologies, and imagine possibilities for social transformation. With the advent of modern audio-visual media, particularly cinema, storytelling acquired unprecedented immediacy and persuasive power. Cinema, through its synthesis of visual imagery, sound, performance, and narrative, not only entertains but also shapes public consciousness by constructing representations of history, identity, and justice. As Raymond Williams argues in *Television: Technology and Cultural Form*, audio-visual media operate simultaneously as mechanisms of social integration and ideological control, functioning within broader political, economic, and cultural structures that influence public perception (12–15). Building upon Williams's insight, this study examines how contemporary Indian cinema mobilises the audio-visual medium to expose, interrogate, and critique one of South Asia's most deeply entrenched systems of social inequality, the caste system. Rather than merely portraying discrimination as an isolated social problem, the selected films reveal how caste operates through institutional structures, particularly the criminal justice system, thereby transforming cinema into a site of ideological contestation and political intervention.

The study focuses on two significant contemporary films: *Article 15* (2019), directed by Anubhav Sinha, and *Jai Bhim* (2021), directed by T. J. Gnanavel. Although produced within different linguistic, industrial, and distribution contexts, both films foreground the relationship between caste oppression and state institutions while centering legal and police procedures as the primary sites through which social inequality is reproduced and contested. *Article 15*, released theatrically in Hindi cinema, follows Ayan Ranjan, an upper-caste urban Indian Police Service officer who is posted to rural Uttar Pradesh and becomes involved in investigating the disappearance and gang rape-murder of two Scheduled Caste girls. The narrative draws clear inspiration from documented incidents of caste violence, particularly the 2014 Badaun gang-rape case and the 2016 Una flogging incident, thereby situating fictional events within the historical reality of systemic caste-based atrocities (Bhalla; "Dalit Thrashed"). In contrast, *Jai Bhim*, released globally through Amazon Prime Video, reconstructs the legal struggle led by Justice K. Chandru on behalf of an Irula tribal woman seeking justice after her husband is subjected to custodial torture and death by the police. By dramatising a documented legal case, the film foregrounds constitutional resistance, institutional accountability, and the agency of marginalised communities confronting state violence.

The titles of these films themselves function as ideological statements that frame their respective political interventions. *Article 15* derives its title from Article 15 of the Constitution of India, which prohibits discrimination on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth, thereby invoking the constitutional promise of equality before the law. *Jai Bhim*, meaning "Victory to Bhim," invokes the enduring legacy of Dr B. R. Ambedkar, principal architect of the Indian Constitution and one of the

foremost leaders of the anti-caste movement. Read together, these titles establish a productive dialogue between constitutional legality and Ambedkarite social justice. While *Article 15* foregrounds the constitutional text as an instrument of reform, *Jai Bhim* situates constitutional rights within the broader history of anti-caste struggle, emphasising that legal protections emerged through sustained resistance by oppressed communities. This tension between the formal authority of the Constitution and the lived realities of caste discrimination provides a central conceptual foundation for the comparative analysis undertaken in this study.

Comparative film analysis offers an especially productive framework for examining these texts because it moves beyond the regional and linguistic compartmentalisation that frequently characterises Indian film scholarship. Placing a mainstream Hindi theatrical release alongside a Tamil direct-to-digital (OTT) production enables a richer understanding of how different industrial locations negotiate similar questions of caste, justice, and institutional violence. Such a comparison reveals the emergence of a broader “caste courtroom and procedural drama” subgenre while simultaneously highlighting the distinct ideological, linguistic, and regional inflections through which each film constructs state power and resistance. Contemporary anti-caste cinema has witnessed remarkable growth across regional industries through filmmakers such as Nagraj Manjule in *Fandry* and Mari Selvaraj in *Karnan*, whose works have significantly expanded cinematic representations of caste oppression. Nevertheless, sustained cross-industry comparative scholarship remains relatively limited, making it essential to examine how national and regional cinematic traditions differently encode caste, constitutionalism, and institutional authority within their respective narrative structures.

Although both *Article 15* and *Jai Bhim* have attracted considerable academic and critical attention, existing scholarship has largely examined them as independent cinematic texts rather than through an integrated comparative framework. Critical discussions surrounding *Article 15* have frequently interrogated its reliance on the “Brahmin saviour” narrative, arguing that despite exposing caste discrimination, the film continues to privilege a savarna perspective and mediates Dalit experiences through the moral consciousness of an upper-caste protagonist (Banerjee 83; EPW Engage). Conversely, scholarship on *Jai Bhim* has emphasised its Ambedkarite political orientation, its representation of constitutional justice, and its portrayal of Adivasi resistance against state violence (“Justice, Identity”). However, what remains comparatively underexplored is a sustained theoretical analysis that explains both the structural convergences and ideological divergences between these films, particularly in their representations of the state, policing, and subaltern agency. Addressing this gap constitutes one of the principal motivations for the present research.

Against this backdrop, the study addresses two interrelated research problems. First, it investigates how *Article 15* and *Jai Bhim* cinematically construct the machinery of criminal justice as an institutional apparatus that reproduces caste hierarchy rather than functioning as a neutral guarantor of equality. Second, it examines the extent to which the films differ in their authorial, industrial, and ideological

positioning, particularly the tension between upper-caste mediation and autonomous subaltern agency. These problems are explored through four primary objectives: to analyze the narrative and cinematic construction of caste-based bias in policing; to apply Louis Althusser's concepts of interpellation and the distinction between Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs) and Repressive State Apparatuses (RSAs) in explaining police behavior; to investigate how authorial positionality—represented by a mainstream Hindi film centered on a savarna protagonist and an Ambedkarite Tamil legal drama—shapes narrative resolution and the representation of marginalized communities; and to situate both films within the broader material history of caste-based policing and Indian cinema.

Correspondingly, the study seeks to answer three central research questions. It first asks how Article 15 and Jai Bhim visually and narratively represent the interpellation of law enforcement personnel into caste ideology. It then examines how each film differentiates between Ideological State Apparatuses and Repressive State Apparatuses in its depiction of custodial violence and institutional coercion. Finally, it explores how the respective authorial and industrial contexts—a Bollywood studio production centred upon a savarna protagonist and a Tamil star-produced OTT film grounded in Ambedkarite legal history—influence each film's narrative resolution, ideological orientation, and representation of justice.

The significance of this study lies in its attempt to integrate cultural materialism with Althusserian theory to produce a comprehensive comparative reading of contemporary Indian anti-caste cinema. By combining textual interpretation with cinematic analysis and ideological critique, the research demonstrates how popular films negotiate the contradictions between constitutional ideals, systemic caste oppression, and state violence across different regional contexts. Such an approach contributes not only to Indian film studies but also to broader discussions concerning cinema, ideology, and social justice by illustrating how film participates in the production, reinforcement, and contestation of dominant political narratives.

The scope of this research is confined to a close textual, cinematic, and theoretical analysis of Article 15 and Jai Bhim. To contextualise the comparative discussion, the study also refers to related films such as Fandry and Karnan, documented incidents of caste violence, and statistical evidence including National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) reports. However, the research does not extend to empirical audience reception studies or field-based investigations, focusing instead on qualitative textual analysis informed by film theory, ideological criticism, and historical context.

The remainder of the paper is organised into six major sections. Following this introductory discussion, the study reviews existing scholarship on caste representation, state violence, and Indian cinema before establishing its theoretical framework, grounded in cultural materialism and Althusserian ideology. It then outlines the qualitative research methodology adopted for the comparative analysis, followed by an extensive examination of the narrative structures, cinematic techniques, and ideological representations of Article 15 and Jai Bhim. The subsequent discussion synthesises the comparative findings to demonstrate how both films negotiate the relationship between caste, law, and state power. Finally, the paper concludes

by evaluating the broader implications of these findings for contemporary Indian film studies, anti-caste discourse, and future research on cinema as a site of ideological struggle.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Historicizing Caste on the Indian Screen

Indian cinema's engagement with caste extends back to early social-reform melodramas such as Franz Osten's *Achhut Kanya* (1936) and Bimal Roy's *Sujata* (1959), which framed inter-caste intimacy as tragic, moral dilemmas resolved through upper-caste benevolence. Parallel cinema in the 1980s—such as Govind Nihalani's *Aakrosh* (1980) and Gautam Ghose's *Paar* (1984)—shifted focus toward state violence, judicial failure, and agrarian class exploitation.

In the 2010s, a new wave of anti-caste filmmakers reshaped the landscape. Nagraj Manjule's *Fandry* (2013) and *Sairat* (2016) grounded caste violence in rural feudal structures, demonstrating how romantic desire across caste lines remains an inherently tragic proposition within endogamous social systems (EPW Engage). Mari Selvaraj's *Pariyerum Perumal* (2018) and Karnan (2021) further dismantled the reformist template by depicting subaltern self-defense and structural resistance against state-sanctioned police brutality. *Article 15* and *Jai Bhim* insert themselves directly into this evolving lineage of cinematic state critique.

2.2 Scholarship on Article 15

Critical reception of *Article 15* was deeply fractured. While mainstream reviewers praised its willingness to confront caste atrocities in multiplex spaces (Khullar), Dalit-Bahujan scholars criticised its narrative architecture. Debjani Banerjee argues through the framework of "necropolitics" that the film relies on a Brahmin-coded saviour protagonist, reproducing a "Brahmin Gaze" where subaltern suffering is validated only through an upper-caste intermediary (83). The EPW Engage collective similarly notes that *Article 15* risks recentering savarna spectatorship by framing caste not as a pervasive structural power in which the viewer is implicated, but as an exotic, backwards rural pathology discovered by an enlightened outsider.

2.3 Scholarship on Jai Bhim

Scholarship on *Jai Bhim* highlights its grounding in Ambedkarite constitutionalism. Scholars note how Advocate Chandru operates through legal method rather than vigilantism to challenge institutional power (Tiwari; "Resistance"). Analyses of the film's visual semiotics observe that recurring iconography—Ambedkar portraits, tribal ornamentation, and formal courtroom spaces—positions constitutional law as a site of subaltern reclamation ("Justice, Identity"). However, critics have also noted that despite its radical politics, *Jai Bhim* relies on a charismatic star figure (Suriya) to drive the legal narrative, slightly shifting focus away from the collective organising of the Irula community.

2.4 Theoretical Debates: Cultural Materialism and Ideology

Existing criticism frequently invokes concepts like "the gaze," "necropolitics," and "iconography" without fully articulating the underlying institutional mechanics through which state institutions maintain caste

power. Raymond Williams's cultural materialism establishes that cultural texts are material social practices embedded in specific industrial modes of production (Williams, *Marxism* 108–14).

Supplementing Williams, Louis Althusser's theory of ideology explains how subjects are "interpellated" (hailed) into social roles by Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs) such as family, religion, and educational institutions, which secure consent, while Repressive State Apparatuses (RSAs) such as police and courts enforce compliance through physical coercion (Althusser 142–47). Synthesising these frameworks allows us to move beyond individual character morality and analyse caste as an institutional apparatus.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1 Cultural Materialism

Raymond Williams's cultural materialism rejects the vulgar Marxist view that culture is a mere passive reflection of an economic base. Instead, cultural practices—including cinema—are active material forces that participate directly in social struggle (Williams, *Marxism* 110). A film is shaped by its industrial conditions of production: studio capitalisation, star power, distribution channels, and target demographics. Applying cultural materialism requires analysing *Article 15* and *Jai Bhim* not as disembodied artistic statements, but as commercial cultural artefacts navigating the ideological demands of multiplex audiences and global streaming platforms.

3.2 Althusserian Ideology: Interpellation, ISA, and RSA

Louis Althusser asserts that ideology operates by interpellating concrete individuals as concrete subjects (Althusser 160). Interpellation occurs when an individual internalises institutional norms so thoroughly that their actions feel natural, uncoerced, and obvious.

To maintain social order, the state utilizes two distinct but overlapping apparatuses:

- Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs): Plural, private-sphere institutions (family, religious customs, schools, media) that function primarily through ideology and consent to produce disciplined subjects.
 - Repressive State Apparatuses (RSAs): Singular, public-sphere institutions (police, military, courts, prisons) that function primarily through coercion and physical force to suppress threats to the ruling order.
- In the Indian context, caste operates as a primary ISA: religious tradition, family endogamy, and spatial segregation interpellate individuals into rigid hierarchical roles long before they enter state institutions. When interpellated individuals occupy roles within an RSA (such as the police force), their use of state-sanctioned violence becomes a mechanism for enforcing caste discipline.

3.3 Intervening in Existing Scholarship

Prior film scholarship frequently diagnoses the "savarna gaze" or "casteist policing" as individual character flaws or moral failings. Using Althusser's model reframes the problem: police officers like Circle Officer Brahmdutt in *Article 15* or Sub-Inspector Gurumoorthy in *Jai Bhim* are not anomalous "bad apples." They are subjects fully interpellated by caste ISAs, operating within an RSA designed to preserve systemic hierarchies. The critical distinction between the two films lies in how their protagonists engage

this apparatus: Article 15 relies on an elite insider attempting to reform the RSA from within, whereas Jai Bhim uses constitutional legal apparatuses to dismantle RSA overreach from the outside.

4. Research Methodology

4.1 Research Design and Paired-Case Framework

This study utilises a qualitative, interpretive paired-case study design. Comparative film analysis allows scholars to hold genre, theme, and structural setting constant—here, the police procedural investigating caste violence—to isolate how linguistic, industrial, and authorial variations alter the ideological outcome.

4.2 Comparative Axes

The comparative analysis evaluates the primary texts across three interrelated axes:

- i. Narrative Structure: Plot progression, character arcs, and the locus of redemptive agency.
- ii. Cinematic Form: Framing, mise-en-scène, camera movement, sound design, and visual symbolism.
- iii. Ideological Function: Representation of interpellation, the operational interaction between ISAs and RSAs, and the visual construction of subaltern subjects.

4.3 Film Selection Criteria

Article 15 and Jai Bhim were selected according to three specific criteria:

- i. Both are post-2018 Indian films centered on the criminal justice system as the primary arena of caste conflict.
- ii. Both ground their narratives in documented, real-world atrocities against Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) communities.
- iii. Both achieved wide critical and commercial reach across different distribution models (theatrical multiplex vs. global OTT).

4.4 Primary and Secondary Data Collection

Primary data was gathered through scene-by-scene close analysis of both feature films, documenting timecodes, shot compositions, dialogic phrasing, and sound design. Secondary data includes peer-reviewed film scholarship, news coverage of the Badaun and Kamukaran cases, historical legal statutes, and National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) prison reports.

5. Comparative Cinematic Analysis

5.1 Narrative Analysis

Story Structure and Plot Development

Both films adopt the narrative architecture of the investigative procedural, using a crime to expose deep-seated institutional corruption. Article 15 follows Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) Ayan Ranjan, an educated, westernised upper-caste officer assigned to the rural outpost of Laalgaon. His investigation

into the hanging of two lower-caste girls reveals a network of land exploitation, sexual violence, and police cover-ups designed to maintain local caste supremacy.

Jai Bhim opens in medias res with a brutal sequence depicting systemic police profiling, before shifting to the quiet village of the Irula tribe. When Rajakannu is falsely accused of theft and subsequently disappears from custody, his pregnant wife Sengeni seeks out Advocate Chandru, initiating a legal battle through a habeas corpus petition.

Character Arcs and the Locus of Agency

The two films diverge sharply in their character arcs:

- Ayan Ranjan (Article 15): His arc is a classical narrative of elite conscientization. Ayan arrives claiming he cannot see caste, but is forced to confront how deeply embedded he is within savarna privilege. However, because the narrative centres on his moral awakening, the subaltern victims are rendered largely passive, functioning as narrative catalysts for his hero's journey.
- Advocate Chandru and Sengeni (Jai Bhim): Chandru's consciousness is already fully formed; he is an active agent of Ambedkarite legal resistance. Crucially, the film balances Chandru's legal manoeuvring with Sengeni's unyielding refusal to compromise or sign a false confession, situating redemptive agency within subaltern resilience paired with constitutional advocacy.

Feature	Article 15 (2019)	Jai Bhim (2021)
Primary Setting	Rural Uttar Pradesh	Rural & Judicial Tamil Nadu
Distribution Model	Theatrical Multiplex	Direct-to-Digital (OTT)
Central Protagonist	ASP Ayan Ranjan (Savarna)	Adv. Chandru & Sengeni
Locus of Agency	Upper-caste State Insider	Ambedkarite / Adivasi Agent
Ideological Vector	Constitutional Reform	Radical Legal Mobilization

5.2 Cinematic Analysis

Mise-en-scène and Spatial Framing

Cinematic spatiality visually reinforces institutional hierarchy in both texts. In Jai Bhim, the opening sequence at the police station gate (01:44–03:10) establishes how the police force operates as an RSA. As released detainees cross the threshold, an officer asks for their caste. Those from dominant castes are permitted to leave; those identified as Kuravas, Irulas, or Dalits are pulled aside and framed against the harsh, barred enclosures of the station, marked for immediate re-arrest in cold cases. The framing visually categorizes subaltern bodies as permanently suspect.

KEY SCENE ANALYSIS: Visual Category and Spatial Framing

Film: Jai Bhim (01:44–03:10)

Visual Setup: Police station exit gate divided spatially into two lines.

Cinematic Action: Police officers verbally interrogate exiting detainees on caste.

Framing: Dominant caste bodies move horizontally out of frame (freedom);

Subaltern/Adivasi bodies are pushed vertically behind iron bars (containment).

Ideological Function: Demonstrates the RSA actively sorting subjects via ISA logic prior to any formal criminal charge.

In Article 15, spatial segregation is introduced through domestic and workplace etiquette. In an early scene (14:00–15:55), ASP Ayan Ranjan attempts to purchase a bottle of water while traveling with his officers. His subordinate, Circle Officer Brahmdutt, explains the intricate web of sub-caste hierarchies that govern who can accept food or water from whom. Later, when lower-caste officer Kisan Jatav refuses to sit or share snacks on equal spatial terms with his upper-caste peers, the camera uses medium shots to emphasize the physical distance Jatav maintains. His spatial withdrawal illustrates how caste ISAs govern bodily behavior even within a modern state apparatus.

5.3 Cinematography and Lighting

The visual palettes of the two films reflect contrasting emotional strategies:

- Article 15 uses a desaturated, muted colour palette dominated by cold blues, greys, and morning fog. Cinematographer Ewan Mulligan employs slow, static takes and distant wide shots. The iconic shot of the two dead girls hanging from a massive tree in the early dawn fog is framed from a distance, emphasising atmospheric dread and institutional decay.
- Jai Bhim employs high-contrast, warm, textured cinematography in the tribal village scenes, which abruptly shifts to harsh, low-key lighting during scenes of custodial torture. Cinematographer SR Kathir uses dynamic handheld camera movements inside the lockup, bringing the viewer in proximity to the physical reality of violence.

5.4 Sound Design and Naturalisation of Bias

Sound design in Article 15 relies on naturalised, ambient dialogue to emphasise the banality of prejudice. During an extended driving scene (50:29–51:44), police officers casually break down the complex sub-caste rankings of local politicians, victims, and colleagues. The absence of dramatic non-diegetic music transforms casteist discourse into background noise, underscoring how seamlessly caste ideology is integrated into daily administrative routine.

Conversely, Jai Bhim uses a dramatic score by Sean Roldan during courtroom confrontations and custodial abuses. The music punctuates moral ruptures, transforming legal arguments into emotionally heightened battles against state terror.

5.5 Symbolism and Visual Iconography

The two films utilise visual symbols to encode their political frameworks:

- Article 15: Framing of a paper copy of Article 15 on a police wall. The constitution functions as an abstract, top-down mandate held by an elite officer.
- Jai Bhim: Portraits of Dr B. R. Ambedkar in homes and courts. Represents living resistance and collective subaltern reclamation.

6. Comparative Discussion

6.1 Interpellation and the RSA/ISA Dynamic

Applying Althusser's framework demonstrates that both films diagnose the Indian police force not simply as a law enforcement agency, but as an RSA captured by dominant-caste ISAs. Officers like Brahmdudd (Article 15) and Gurumoorthy (Jai Bhim) do not view their actions as criminal; they view themselves as guardians of an essential social equilibrium.

When Gurumoorthy tortures Rajakannu to force a confession, he is enforcing caste discipline on a community perceived as inherently criminal. The police apparatus functions to keep subaltern populations outside the protective boundary of citizenship.

6.2 Differences in Authorial Positionality and Spectatorship

The primary ideological divide between the two films lies in authorial positionality and intended audience:

- Article 15, directed by Anubhav Sinha (a savarna filmmaker) and starring Ayushmann Khurrana, operates within the conventions of mainstream Bollywood. It frames caste oppression through a lens designed to educate urban, upper-caste viewers. Consequently, the film centres Ayan's moral enlightenment, which risks turning Dalit trauma into a backdrop for savarna conscientization.
- Jai Bhim, produced by Suriya and Jyothika and directed by T. J. Gnanavel, emerges from a Tamil film ecology deeply shaped by decades of anti-caste Dravidian and Ambedkarite political movements. While it utilises a star actor to portray Advocate Chandru, it explicitly privileges subaltern political history, framing legal advocacy as an extension of community struggle rather than benevolent rescue.

6.3 Historical and Legal Context: The Colonial Legacy

The behaviour of the police in both films must be understood through the historical evolution of Indian law enforcement. The colonial Criminal Tribes Act (CTA) of 1871 formally designated over two hundred communities—including nomadic and tribal groups—as "born criminals" (Radhakrishna 18–24). Although the CTA was officially repealed in 1949, it was immediately replaced by the Habitual Offenders Act of 1952, which effectively re-stigmatised denotified and tribal communities like the Irulas under a new administrative label ("India Must Scrap").

Jai Bhim depicts how contemporary police officers inherit this colonial legacy, using the Habitual Offenders framework to frame marginal communities for unresolved crimes.

6.4 Empirical Grounding: Prison Statistics

Official state data bear out the institutional bias depicted in both films. According to the National Crime Records Bureau's Prison Statistics India reports, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and religious minorities consistently make up a disproportionate percentage of India's undertrial prison population relative to their demographics ("One in Every Three"). Both films transform these statistical realities into narrative art, illustrating Williams's assertion that cultural texts are material practices directly connected to social conditions.

7. Conclusion

This comparative study has demonstrated that Article 15 and Jai Bhim, when read through Raymond Williams's cultural materialism and Louis Althusser's theory of ideology, critique the Indian criminal justice system as an apparatus caught in the reproduction of caste power. Both films show how police personnel are interpellated into caste ideology long before they enter state service, transforming the Repressive State Apparatus into an instrument of caste enforcement.

However, their narrative strategies diverge significantly based on their industrial and authorial contexts:

- Article 15 presents a top-down model of constitutional reform driven by an upper-caste state insider. While politically valuable for raising awareness among mainstream multiplex audiences, its structural focus on the savarna protagonist limits its capacity to depict subaltern agency.
- Jai Bhim offers a bottom-up model of Ambedkarite legal resistance. By pairing constitutional method with subaltern resilience, it provides a more radical critique of state power.

Theoretically, this paper demonstrates the analytical power of Althusser's framework for analyzing South Asian cinema, moving scholars past individual moral critiques toward structural institutional analysis. Methodologically, it highlights the value of cross-regional comparative film analysis. As popular Indian cinema continues to engage systemic inequality, analyzing the material and ideological structures of these filmic representations remains essential to understanding how cinema reflects—and actively reshapes—the struggle for constitutional justice.

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