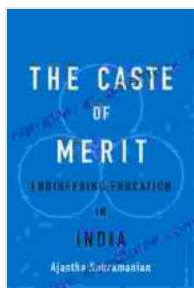


# Unveiling the Caste System in Indian Engineering Education: The Caste of Merit

The aspiration for higher education and the pursuit of a career in engineering holds immense significance in India. Engineering education, perceived as a gateway to economic prosperity and social mobility, has witnessed a surge in popularity over the decades. However, beneath the veneer of meritocracy and equality of opportunity lies a complex reality shaped by the persistent influence of the caste system.



## The Caste of Merit: Engineering Education in India

by Ajantha Subramanian

★★★★☆ 4.7 out of 5

Language : English

File size : 1402 KB

Text-to-Speech : Enabled

Screen Reader : Supported

Enhanced typesetting : Enabled

Word Wise : Enabled

Print length : 376 pages



The book 'The Caste of Merit: Engineering Education in India' by Ajantha Subramanian, published in 2022, sheds light on this intricate interplay of caste, merit, and social stratification in Indian engineering education. This article explores the book's key insights, offering a critical analysis of the caste system's enduring impact on access to higher education and career opportunities.

## **The Caste System: A Pervasive Force**

The caste system, an enduring social hierarchy based on birth, remains a pervasive force in Indian society, influencing various aspects of life, including education. Subramanian's research reveals how the caste system operates subtly and overtly in engineering education, shaping the experiences and outcomes of students from different caste backgrounds.

Discrimination and bias against students from lower castes manifest in various forms, including differential treatment by faculty, exclusion from social networks, and limited access to academic support. This creates a hostile environment that undermines their academic performance and career aspirations.

## **Meritocracy: A Contested Concept**

Meritocracy, the principle of selecting individuals based on their abilities and achievements, is often invoked as a justification for the current system of engineering education in India. However, Subramanian challenges this notion, arguing that meritocracy in Indian society is deeply intertwined with caste.

She demonstrates how the educational system is structured to favor students from privileged castes, who have access to better resources, coaching, and guidance. This inherent bias creates an uneven playing field, making it difficult for students from lower castes to compete on an equal footing.

## **Affirmative Action: A Partial Solution**

In response to the pervasive caste discrimination in education, the Indian government has implemented affirmative action policies, reserving a certain

percentage of seats in engineering colleges for students from marginalized castes. While these policies have made some progress in increasing representation, Subramanian argues that they fall short of addressing the root causes of the caste system.

Affirmative action measures often face resistance from dominant caste groups, who view them as a threat to their privilege. Additionally, these policies are often implemented in a tokenistic manner, failing to create a truly inclusive and equitable educational environment.

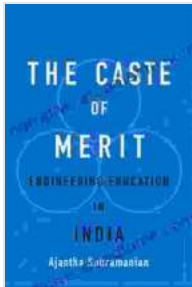
*The Caste of Merit: Engineering Education in India* is a groundbreaking work that exposes the deep-seated caste biases that pervade the Indian engineering education system. Subramanian's research provides a nuanced understanding of the ways in which the caste system operates, limiting opportunities for students from marginalized backgrounds.

While meritocracy remains an aspirational ideal, it is crucial to recognize the ways in which caste continues to shape access to education and career opportunities in India. The book calls for a fundamental rethinking of the existing system and the adoption of comprehensive measures to address the caste-based inequalities that hinder social mobility and perpetuate social stratification.

By unveiling the hidden dynamics of the caste system in engineering education, *The Caste of Merit* prompts us to confront the challenges facing Indian society and strive towards a more just and equitable educational system.

## **Additional Resources**

- The Caste of Merit: Engineering Education in India
- A seismic shift in assessing the role of caste in higher education
- The Caste of Merit: Ajantha Subramanian on engineering education in India



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