

Indian Cinema and Human Rights: An Intersectional Tale

Adam Dubin · Ruchira Goswami · Ishita Sharma
Editors

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 Springer

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Foreword

I am privileged to be a part of this captivating world of cinema. A world in which the magic of storytelling meets the nuances of culture and society. Indian films, with their vibrant frames and dramatic narratives, serve as a powerful medium where the challenges, victories, and intricacies of the human journey echo with profound resonance. Ultimately, I see the narratives portrayed in cinema as stories of humanity.

This book, the first to directly bring together human rights and Indian cinema, is an illuminating exploration of the entwined relationship between the rich tapestry of Indian films and a diverse spectrum of human rights. It explores the profound influence of cinematic art on shaping societal perspectives, illuminating how this medium acts as a powerful catalyst for introspection, activism, accountability, and transformation.

In the pages that follow, readers will navigate through the realm of Indian cinema, revealing its pivotal role in amplifying silenced voices, questioning established norms, and igniting essential dialogues on crucial human rights concerns. This book captures the dynamic interplay between human rights, Indian law and Indian cinema, and the ongoing journey towards a more just and equitable society. Through the writings of an inter-disciplinary group of scholars and members of the film community, the chapters capture many of the human rights issues that are at the heart of our struggles here in India and abroad: gender equality, social justice, socio-economic rights, the safeguarding of minority groups, LGBTQ+, workers' rights, freedom of expression, freedom of religion and child labor.

Drawing on films throughout the history of Indian cinema, the scholars who contributed to this book navigate the complex layers of Indian cinema, offering a comprehensive analysis that not only acknowledges the profound influence of cinematic storytelling but also emphasizes the crucial role of this medium in advocating for human rights. In many ways, this book is a reminder for me of the powerful role those of us who work in Indian cinema have in advancing human rights not only in India, but globally, especially as Indian cinema now reaches worldwide audiences.

With streaming platforms and the globalization of Indian cinema, now is the moment to recognize and reflect on the awesome influence that cinema can have on a society. As we embark on this exploration into the heart of Indian cinema and

its enduring relationship with the fundamental principles of human rights, let us embrace the transformative power of storytelling and embark on a collective journey towards a more compassionate, just, and equitable global community.

Mumbai, India

Hansal Mehta
Filmmaker and Director

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About the Editors

Adam Dubin originally from New York City, is a human rights scholar and a law professor at Universidad Pontificia Comillas in Madrid, Spain. He is also an adjunct professor of Comparative Human Rights Law at New York University (Madrid Campus). Adam's scholarship focuses on human rights and its intersection with pop culture. He is the co-editor of *The Eurovision Song Contest as a Cultural Phenomenon: From Concert Halls to the Halls of Academia*, the first book to study Eurovision as an academic phenomenon. He is also a frequent speaker on topics related to pop culture and law and is the creator of a popular course he teaches titled, "From Slavery to Black Lives Matter: Jurisprudence, Civil Rights and the Music of Struggle in the U.S.". Adam's other area of scholarship focuses on socio-legal rights in developing countries, of Sub-Saharan Africa and in India. He is the co-editor of the book *Gender, Poverty and Access to Justice: Policy Implementation in Sub-Saharan Africa* (Routledge 2021) and the author of numerous academic articles and book chapters. Adam previously worked for a leading human rights NGO in New Delhi and frequently teaches human rights courses at universities across India, including at Nirma University and at the National University of Juridical Sciences in Kolkata, the latter as part of the Indian Government's Global Indian Academic Network (GIAN) visiting scholar program. Adam is an avid viewer of Indian cinema and streaming series and loves reading books about travel around India and Indian culture. He considers himself an addict of chai masala and is an enthusiast of Indian cooking and cuisine. He recently learned to make a delicious rice pulao.

Ruchira Goswami teaches at the National University of Juridical Sciences (NUJS), Kolkata where she offers courses in Sociology, Film and Law, Gender and Law and Child Rights Law. Her course on Representation of law in films explores the portrayal of human rights and social justice issues of vulnerable groups in films of various genres. She was the Head of the Centre for Child Rights at NUJS, set up in partnership with UNICEF. Her areas of interests include feminist movements and legal reforms, children's rights, representation of law in films and intellectual property and women's rights. She has coauthored a book: "The Violent Domestic: Law, its Practice and Strategies of Survival" (Zubaan 2022) and extensively worked

on projects related to women's rights including a recent project on understanding the survival and resilience of domestic violence survivors funded by the British Academy. Her publications are in *International Human Rights Law and Women's Rights*, *Intellectual Property and Women's Rights*, *Right to Food*, etc. She is closely associated with several human rights and women's rights organizations and conducts workshops and capacity-building programs on human rights issues with various stakeholders.

Ishita Sharma is an international trade law and development scholar, with an academic interest in Indian cinema. She is a law professor in the law department at CUNEF Universidad (Madrid). She has taught students at undergraduate and post-graduate level and has supervised numerous undergraduate and master's theses at different universities. She has also participated in national and international conferences and seminars. Born in the town of Chhattisgarh in India, she spent most of her formative years in Pune and Mumbai. Upon completion of her bachelor's in law from Pune University, Ishita pursued a Masters in Commercial and Corporate Law from Queen Mary, University of London. After practicing law in Mumbai representing clients before the Bombay High Court, she continued her career in Spain where she obtained her Ph.D. in international trade and competition law from Carlos III University of Madrid. Her research area focuses on international law, the interrelation between commercial law and human rights and the effects of competition law on development. Ishita's current work explores the intersection of human rights and business operations in developing countries. In particular, she is studying how Indian cinema has contributed to shaping social perceptions and the legal framework on issues such as child labor.