

A Semiotic Analysis of Denotified Tribes in Hindi Cinema: From "Criminal Tribes" to Cinematic Characters

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Abstract—This study looks at how Denotified Tribes shown in Hindi movies. These groups have been treated unfairly. Marginalized for a long time because of a law called the Criminal Tribes Act. Hindi movies are important in creating and spreading ideas about these groups. This research uses ideas from Ferdinand de Saussure and Roland Barthes to understand the signs and symbols used in Hindi films to show Tribes. The study examines how stereotypes are shown in movies and how they are changed by norms like language, costumes and settings. The study finds that modern cinema is slowly showing Denotified Tribes in a nuanced way but there are still signs of marginalization.

Index Terms—Denotified Tribes, Hindi Cinema, Semiotics, Representation, Stereotypes, Marginality, Symbolism

I. INTRODUCTION

Cinema has an influence on how we think about social issues and marginalized communities. Hindi films have shown different cultures and communities but the way Denotified Tribes are shown is not well understood and is often problematic. Denotified Tribes were treated unfairly under rule and were called "criminal tribes". Even after the law was changed these communities still face exclusion, stereotypes and discrimination. The history of Denotified Tribes in India is closely linked to the Criminal Tribes Act of 1871. The Act classified some communities as "criminal by birth" and this led to surveillance, restriction and social exclusion. The social stigma associated with these groups has continued after the Act was abolished.

Denotified Tribes in India have a history of being marginalized. The British colonial administration classified them as "criminal by birth". This led to many problems for these communities. The social stigma

associated with Denotified Tribes has continued after the Act was abolished. Hindi cinema often shows Tribes as the "dangerous other" and this perpetuates colonial myths of criminality and deviance.

This study looks at how Denotified Tribes are shown in Hindi cinema through a semiotic perspective. It examines how cinematic signs and symbols contribute to the creation of stereotypes associated with Denotified Tribes. The research also explores whether contemporary Hindi cinema has moved beyond stereotypes to offer more nuanced portrayals of Denotified Tribes.

The importance of this study lies in its approach that combines film studies, semiotics, postcolonial theory and subaltern discourse. While there has been a lot of research on the representation of Dalits, women and religious minorities in cinema, Denotified Tribes remain largely absent from mainstream academic discussions. By focusing on the construction of Denotified Tribes identities in Hindi films this research attempts to contribute to the broader discourse on media representation, cultural memory and social justice.

Furthermore this study is relevant in the socio-political context where Denotified Tribes continue to face discrimination, police harassment and economic marginalization. Cinematic representation plays a role in shaping public consciousness therefore analyzing how films encode and circulate meanings about Denotified Tribes becomes essential for understanding the persistence of social prejudice.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The depiction of communities that have faced demotion in cinema is an area of study within cultural studies film studies and media sociology. Scholars have looked into how cinema creates identities

through stories that convey ideologies, visual symbols and the way representations are handled. However with more academic interest in caste, gender and tribal representation in Indian cinema the way Denotified Tribes (DNTs) are depicted remains largely unexplored. Existing literature on DNTs how they were criminalized during times, semiotics and cinematic representation provides a strong foundation for this study. One of the scholarly discussions about Denotified Tribes comes from colonial administrative records and anthropological writings from British rule in India. Many nomadic and semi-nomadic societies were labeled as "criminals" under the Criminal Tribes Act of 1871 which justified their social isolation and official monitoring. The colonial idea of criminality has been extensively analyzed by scholars like Meena Radhakrishna, who argues that the Act was more about punishing communities who opposed colonial rule than it was about reducing crime. Her study shows how colonial rhetoric turned groups into targets of social shame and distrust. Understanding the origins of stereotyped depictions that later appeared in literature and film requires knowledge of this context.

Postcolonial scholars have further explored how colonial ideologies continue to shape institutions and cultural narratives. Edward Said's concept of "Orientalism" explains how dominant powers construct marginalized communities as the "Other" through systems of representation. Although Said primarily focuses on the East-West binary his framework is relevant to the study of DNTs because Hindi cinema often portrays denotified communities as exotic, dangerous, uncivilized or morally deviant. Similarly Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's notion of the "subaltern" helps explain the absence of DNT voices within mainstream cinematic narratives. DNT communities are frequently represented by social groups rather than through self-representation resulting in distorted and stereotypical portrayals.

Within sociological discourse scholars such as G.N. Devy, Kancha Ilaiah and Anand Teltumbde have highlighted the continued marginalization of Denotified and Nomadic Tribes in post-independence India. Their works emphasize that although the colonial label of "tribes" was legally abolished social prejudice remains deeply embedded in state institutions and public consciousness. These studies suggest that media representations contribute significantly to maintaining stigma by repeatedly

associating these communities with criminality, violence and social instability.

Film scholars have extensively analyzed the politics of representation in cinema. Ashis Nandy argues that popular Hindi cinema often reflects social anxieties and ideological structures. Rachel Dwyer and Madhava Prasad have examined how Hindi films construct identity through recurring social archetypes. Their studies reveal that marginalized communities in mainstream cinema are frequently reduced to stereotypes that reinforce hegemonic narratives. Although these scholars do not specifically focus on DNTs their analyses provide insights into how cinematic language operates ideologically.

Research on caste and tribal representation in cinema also offers important parallels for this study. Scholars studying Dalit representation argue that mainstream Hindi cinema historically erased or misrepresented lower-caste identities. Sharmila Rege and Satyanarayana have shown how cinema often reproduces social structures through selective visibility and symbolic coding. Similarly tribal characters in films are frequently depicted either as primitive and violent or as romanticized symbols of freedom and nature. These representational patterns are relevant because DNT characters in Hindi cinema are often portrayed through binaries of fear, exoticism and social otherness.

Semiotics forms another body of literature informing this research. Ferdinand de Saussure's theory of signs introduced the idea that meaning is produced through relationships between signifiers and signified concepts. Roland Barthes expanded analysis by explaining how cultural myths naturalize ideological meanings through media and popular culture. In studies semiotics enables researchers to decode how costumes gestures, camera angles, settings, dialogues and soundtracks communicate hidden social meanings. Christian Metz applied theory directly to cinema arguing that films operate as systems of signs that shape audience interpretation. Using these frameworks scholars have demonstrated how films subtly encode ideas about race, class, gender and criminality. Studies specifically examining crime and outlaw imagery in cinema are particularly relevant to this research. Several scholars have analyzed the representation of dacoits and bandits in films such as *Sholay*, *Bandit Queen* and *Mujhe Jeene Do*. These analyses reveal how cinematic narratives often blur

distinctions between oppression and inherent criminality. Outlaw figures are frequently represented through markers such as rugged costumes, desert landscapes, aggressive body language and violent speech patterns. Such recurring signs contribute to a mythologized image of communities that resonates with colonial stereotypes associated with DNTs.

Contemporary media studies also highlight the role of cinema in shaping perception and social memory. Stuart Hall's theory of representation emphasizes that media does not merely reflect reality but actively constructs it. According to Hall repeated images and narratives create meanings that become normalized within society. Applying this perspective to cinema suggests that stereotypical portrayals of DNT-related characters influence audience understanding of nomadic and denotified communities thereby reinforcing social prejudice and exclusion.

Despite these contributions there exists a major gap in scholarship concerning the direct semiotic analysis of Denotified Tribes in Hindi cinema. Most existing studies focus broadly on caste, tribes or criminal imagery without examining how cinematic language constructs DNT identities. This research seeks to fill that gap by integrating analysis, semiotic theory and film criticism to study how Hindi cinema reproduces, negotiates or challenges the colonial discourse surrounding Denotified Tribes. Therefore the present study positions itself at the intersection of film studies, semiotics, postcolonial theory and subaltern discourse. By analyzing cinematic signs and representational patterns the research aims to contribute to a more inclusive understanding of marginalized identities within Indian visual culture.

III. HYPOTHETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 The study, "From 'Criminal Tribes' to Cinematic Characters: A Semiotic Exploration of Denotified Tribes (DNTs) in Hindi Cinema" is grounded in an interdisciplinary theoretical framework that combines Semiotics, Representation Theory, Postcolonial Theory and Subaltern Studies. These theoretical perspectives collectively help in understanding how Hindi cinema constructs meanings around Denotified Tribes through signs, symbols, narratives and ideological discourses. Since cinema is not merely a form of entertainment but a cultural institution that shapes social perception the study employs these

theories to decode how visual and narrative representations contribute to the formation of stereotypes and public consciousness regarding DNT communities.

3.2 Semiotics and Meaning-Making in Movies- Semiotics the study of signs and signification forms the theoretical basis of this research. The concept was first systematically developed by Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, who argued that meaning is produced through the relationship between the signifier (the form of a sign) and the signified (the concept or meaning associated with it). According to Saussure signs acquire meaning not naturally but through social conventions. In cinema every visual and auditory element functions as a sign. Costumes, gestures, camera angles, lighting, dialogues, background music and settings all communicate meanings to the audience. For example in films characters associated with outlaw or nomadic communities are often shown wearing rugged clothes, carrying weapons living in barren landscapes or speaking in aggressive dialects. These cinematic signs create associations with danger, criminality and social deviance. Through repeated representation such images become normalized within imagination. Roland Barthes further expanded theory by introducing the concept of myth. According to Barthes media texts transform ideological constructs into "natural" social truths. In the context of this study the colonial stereotype of Denotified Tribes as "born criminals" becomes a myth when cinema repeatedly reproduces such imagery without questioning its historical origins. Thus semiotic analysis helps reveal how Hindi cinema encodes meanings about DNT communities through visual and narrative language. The study also draws upon Christian Metz's theory of film semiotics, which considers cinema a system of signs similar to language. Metz argues that films communicate through codes and conventions that audiences learn to interpret. Applying Metz's framework allows the study to examine how techniques such as framing, editing, mise-en-scène and sound design participate in constructing DNT-related identities onscreen.

3.3 Representation Theory-Representation Theory, particularly the work of Stuart Hall provides another major framework for this research. Hall argues that

media does not simply reflect reality; rather it actively. Shapes social reality through representation. Meaning is produced through language, discourse and symbolic systems. These representations influence how societies perceive particular communities. According to Hall representation is deeply connected to power because dominant groups often control how marginalized communities are portrayed in media. In Hindi cinema Denotified Tribes are rarely represented through their voices or lived experiences. Instead they are frequently depicted through imposed stereotypes associated with criminality, violence, lawlessness or exoticism. Such representations reinforce social attitudes and contribute to the marginalization of these communities.

Hall's concept of stereotyping is especially important for this study. Stereotyping reduces human identities into fixed and simplified categories. Through cinematic portrayals DNT-related characters become associated with limited traits such as aggression, deceit, nomadism and social disorder. Representation theory therefore helps in understanding how Hindi cinema constructs boundaries, between the "civilized" mainstream and the "criminalized other."

3.4 Postcolonial Theory is also central to this study- It helps us understand the roots of Denotified Tribes representation in Indian cinema. The study engages with Edward Said's concept of Orientalism, which explains how colonial powers constructed colonized populations as inferior. Although Said's work primarily addresses representations of the East the framework is applicable to internal systems of marginalization within postcolonial societies.

The Criminal Tribes Act of 1871 is an event in the history of Denotified Tribes. It institutionalized stereotypes by labeling entire communities as hereditary criminals. These constructions did not disappear after independence; instead they continued to influence attitudes and cultural representations. Hindi cinema often reproduces these inherited narratives through depictions of wandering tribes or outlaw groups.

Homi K. Bhabha's ideas of otherness and stereotype are also relevant to this study. Bhabha argues that colonial stereotypes create fixed identities for marginalized groups. Such stereotypes are ambivalent because they produce both fear and fascination. In Hindi cinema Denotified Tribes-related characters are

often portrayed as both dangerous and romanticized reflecting this colonial gaze. The study also incorporates perspectives from Subaltern Studies, the work of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Spivak's question, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" highlights how marginalized communities are often denied agency within systems of representation. Denotified Tribes occupy a position within Indian society because they have historically remained socially excluded and culturally invisible. Hindi cinema rarely provides narratives centered on Denotified Tribes experiences; instead these communities appear as peripheral characters within mainstream stories.

Subaltern theory helps analyze how cinematic discourse silences real Denotified Tribes voices while constructing them as objects of fear or spectacle. Furthermore Subaltern Studies emphasizes recovering marginalized histories that dominant narratives ignore. This approach is significant because it allows the research to critically challenge cinematic portrayals and highlight the socio-historical realities of Denotified Tribes beyond stereotypes.

The integration of Semiotics, Representation Theory, Postcolonial Theory and Subaltern Studies provides a framework for analyzing the representation of Denotified Tribes in Hindi cinema. Semiotics helps decode signs and symbols; Representation Theory explains how media constructs social meaning; Postcolonial Theory uncovers the colonial roots of criminalized identities; and Subaltern Studies foregrounds issues of voice, exclusion and marginalization.

Together these theories enable the study to critically examine how Hindi cinema participates in the production of Denotified Tribes identities. The framework also helps explore whether contemporary films challenge stereotypes or continue to reinforce dominant narratives of criminality and social otherness. Through this approach the research aims to contribute to broader discussions on media representation, cultural politics and social justice in Indian cinema.

The historical background of Denotified Tribes in India is connected to governance, social control and the politics of criminalization. The term "Denotified Tribes" refers to communities that were officially categorized as "Criminal Tribes" under British colonial law. Despite the abolition of this

classification these communities continue to experience social stigma and marginalization.

Before colonial rule many nomadic and tribal communities in India functioned as integral parts of the socio-economic structure. These groups engaged in occupations and had their own cultural traditions. However because many of these groups existed outside caste-based agrarian structures they were often viewed with suspicion by settled populations and ruling authorities.

The Criminal Tribes Act of 1871 was an event in the history of Denotified Tribes. It empowered authorities to identify, register, monitor and control entire communities suspected of criminal behavior. Under the Act members of notified tribes were subjected to surveillance and were required to register with local authorities. Entire communities were confined to settlements where their daily activities could be monitored.

The Act did not target individuals for crimes; instead it criminalized entire communities collectively. This marked a shift from individual accountability to hereditary suspicion. Colonial administrators justified the Act as necessary for maintaining law and order. Scholars argue that it was primarily a tool of social control over mobile populations that did not conform to colonial administrative structures.

The Criminal Tribes Act was expanded times bringing more communities under its scope. By the twentieth century hundreds of communities, across India had been officially notified as criminal tribe Representation Theory s. This institutionalized stigma profoundly affected their status and access to education, employment and civil rights.

IV. COLONIAL STEREOTYPES AND SOCIAL STIGMA

4.1 The British labeled some communities as “tribes” a long time ago. This produced stereotypes that lasted for a long time. The British wrote about these groups in their books and police reports. They said these groups were bad people who could not be trusted. People started to believe these things about the communities. The British also used pictures and documents to show these communities as people. They made it seem like these communities were not civilized and were a threat to others. This had bad effects on these communities. They were not allowed

to be part of the society. They were not given their rights. The police would often bother them. Even after India became independent people still thought these communities were bad. They thought they were thieves and criminals. These ideas were shown in books, stories and movies.

4.2 DE Notification After Independence -After India became independent in 1947 people started to say that the Criminal Tribes Act was not fair. They said it was against rights. So the Government of India cancelled the Act in 1952. The communities that were affected by this Act were officially “denotified”. They were then called Denotified Tribes. Even after this these communities still faced discrimination. The government made a law that allowed the police to keep an eye on people who they thought might be criminals. Many Denotified Tribes were still suspected of being criminals. They were always being watched by the police. The change from “tribes” to “denotified tribes” did not make much of a difference. These communities were still very poor. Did not have access to good education or jobs. They were still treated badly by the police. The idea that they were criminals was still in people’s minds.

4.3 DNTs in Postcolonial India-In India today the Denotified Tribes are one of the marginalized groups. They have a time getting official recognition. They are not given the benefits as other groups. Many of these communities do not have access to education, healthcare or jobs. Some people have written about the problems faced by these communities. They have talked about the violence and bad treatment they face from the police. Even though the law says everyone is equal the Denotified Tribes are still treated unfairly. They are not shown in a light in the media or in public. When they are shown in movies or books they are often portrayed as criminals or bad people.

4.4 Historical Legacy And Cinematic Representation-The way the Denotified Tribes were treated in the past has affected how they are shown in movies. The British stereotypes of these communities as “tribes” are still seen in Hindi cinema. Many movies show these communities as bad people. This is not entertainment but it also shows the prejudices that exist in our society. Understanding the history of the

Denotified Tribes helps us see how movies portray them.

It helps us understand that these portrayals are not neutral but are shaped by the past and the prejudices that exist in our society.

V. SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF HINDI CINEMA

Hindi cinema is a way of communicating social messages. The way Denotified Tribes are shown in movies is often symbolic. They are not shown directly. Through characters who are nomads, criminals or outlaws.

Through analysis we can understand how these symbols create meanings about these communities. Semiotics is the study of how meanings are created through signs. In movies these signs can be costumes, body language, dialogue, settings and music.

These signs do not just entertain, they also communicate messages about identity, morality and social hierarchy. In the case of Denotified Tribes, Hindi cinema often uses symbols that associate them with danger, violence and social otherness.

5.1 Visual Coding And Costume Symbolism - Costumes are an important part of Hindi cinema. They can indicate a person's class, caste, job or morality. Characters who are nomads or outlaws are often shown wearing types of clothes that make them look different from others.

For example men from these communities are often shown wearing turbans, rough clothes and carrying weapons. Women are shown wearing jewelry, colorful clothes and lots of makeup. These visual symbols create a distinction between the settled society and the nomadic communities. From a perspective these costumes are signs that indicate danger, backwardness and social deviance. When these symbols are repeated in movies they become a normal way of thinking about these communities.

5.2 Mise-En-Scène and Spatial Representation- Mise-en-scène refers to the arrangement of elements in a movie scene. Hindi cinema often shows Tribes in certain types of locations, such as barren landscapes, forests or deserts. These locations are associated with lawlessness, danger and being outside the order. For example movies about outlaws often show them in the Chambal ravines. This location is symbolic of rebellion and criminality. The way these locations are

shown creates a sense of fear and suspense. It reinforces the idea that these communities are a threat to society.

5.3 Body Language and Physical Representation - Body language is another symbol in Hindi cinema. Characters from Denotified Tribes are often shown with gestures, loud speech and hyper masculine behavior. Their physical movements are exaggerated to show unpredictability and danger. Men from these communities are often shown carrying weapons riding horses or smoking aggressively. Women are shown as either hyper sexualized or as sufferers. The cinematic body becomes a symbol where social anxieties about these communities are projected. Through repeated stereotypes movies create simplified identities that erase the diversity and humanity of real Denotified Tribes.

5.4 Language, Dialect, And Dialogue- Language and dialogue are also symbols in Hindi cinema. Characters from Denotified Tribes are often given dialects or slang. This signifies inferiority and cultural difference. Dialogues involving violence, threats or crime reinforce the image of criminality. Mainstream characters are given language and moral authority creating a binary opposition between "civilized" society and the "criminalized other".

5.5 Music and Sound Symbolism- Music and sound design contribute to the construction of cinematic identities. Scenes involving Denotified Tribes are often accompanied by percussion, dramatic instrumental sounds or suspenseful music. This creates responses of fear, tension or excitement among audiences. Folk music associated with these communities is sometimes romanticized, while violent scenes use rhythmic sounds to emphasize danger.

5.6 Narrative Structures and Stereotyping- Narrative structure is another semiotic component of Hindi cinema. Denotified Tribes are often positioned as villains, side characters or comic figures, rather than central protagonists. Their stories are often framed through themes of violence, revenge or social disorder. This narrative framing removes attention from oppression and instead individualizes criminality. The way Hindi cinema tells stories about groups of people can lead to stereotypes. According to Stuart Hall stereotypes

make people seem like they are all the same and keep groups apart. Hindi movies often show Denotified Tribes as criminals or nomads. They do not talk about the bad things that happened to these people in the past.

5.7 Colonial Myths and Cinematic Continuity-The way Hindi movies tell stories is connected to what people thought during the time of the British rule in India. The Criminal Tribes Act of 1871 said that some communities were born to be criminals. Even though this law is not in place anymore movies still show ideas through symbols and signs. These signs, like guns and desert landscapes make people think that certain groups are violent or dangerous. This happens because these signs are shown times in movies and they influence what people think about marginalized communities. So movies are not just for entertainment. They also shape what people think about certain groups. At the time some new movies are trying to show these groups in a different way. They are giving them emotional depth and showing their social and political situation. This means that there is a change in the way movies show these groups even though most movies still use old stereotypes.

5.8 Conclusion- Looking at movies in a certain way shows that how people are represented in movies is connected to history and ideology. Movies use symbols, stories and language to show Denotified Tribes as marginal, dangerous or exotic. These representations are not about movies but they are also connected to broader cultural discussions that are shaped by history and social hierarchy.

Looking at the symbols and signs in movies shows how they make stereotypes seem normal. This influences how people think about Denotified Tribes and contributes to their marginalization. So it is essential to look at the symbols and signs in movies to understand how media, ideology and marginalized identities are connected.

VI. CASE STUDIES

To understand how Hindi cinema constructs and circulates meanings related to Denotified Tribes it is essential to look at movies that show nomadic or outlawed communities. The movies selected for this study like *Mujhe Jeene Do*, *Bandit Queen*, *Sholay* and

Sonchiriya represent times in Hindi cinema and show varied representations of outlaw identities. These case studies look at how cinematic signs, like costumes and landscapes shape what people think about marginalized criminalized communities

6.1 *Mujhe Jeene Do*- This movie is one of the Hindi films to humanize the figure of the dacoit but it also reinforces some stereotypes. The movie is about a bandit who struggles between violence and redemption. The movie uses the Chambal ravines as a symbol of isolation and lawlessness. The way the bandits dress and the music in the movie also contribute to the construction of the outlaw identity as anti-social. However the movie also shows the bandits vulnerability, which challenges the stereotype of the "inhuman criminal." The movie does not fully explore the social reasons behind the bandit's existence. It frames outlaw life through violence and moral conflict rather than structural oppression.

6.2 *Bandit Queen*- This movie is based on the life of Phoolan Devi. Shows a narrative of caste oppression, sexual violence and rebellion. The movie situates criminality within systems of social injustice, which is different from earlier dacoit films. The movie uses visuals and sound to create an authentic atmosphere. Phoolan Devi's transformation from victim to outlaw is shown through her costume and body language. The rifle becomes a symbol of her agency and rebellion. However the movie also risks sensationalizing violence, which may reinforce audience fascination with outlaw identity than fully humanizing marginalized communities.

6.3 *Sholay* - This movie is an action-drama that significantly shaped the cinematic image of dacoits in India. The central antagonist, Gabbar Singh is represented through cinematic signs that construct fear and chaos. The movie establishes a moral binary between civilized society and outlaw violence. The village represents order and morality whereas the dacoit gang symbolizes destruction and lawlessness. This reflects stereotypes of criminal tribes as threats to social stability. The movie does not explore the socio-historical reasons behind outlaw existence. Criminality is personalized through Gabbar Singh's villainy than contextualized socially.

6.4 Sonchiriya- This movie offers a nuanced portrayal of dacoit communities. It presents outlaw life as complex and socially conditioned. The movie uses visuals and sound to create an authentic atmosphere. The characters are portrayed with depth and their costumes are simple and practical. The film avoids glamorizing violence. Instead emphasizes exhaustion, trauma and moral ambiguity. The movie critiques violence and exposes social hypocrisy regarding caste and honor. It challenges myths associated with outlaw communities by situating violence within broader socio-political conditions.

6.5 Conclusion- The case studies show how Hindi cinema has historically constructed and circulated myths surrounding criminalized and marginalized communities associated with Denotified Tribes. While some movies reinforce stereotypes others attempt to situate violence within broader systems of caste oppression and historical injustice. The case studies reveal that Hindi cinema not reflects societal attitudes toward marginalized communities but also actively contributes to shaping and legitimizing those attitudes through symbolic and narrative representation.

VII. DISCUSSION

The analysis of selected Hindi films reveals that cinematic representations of Denotified Tribes and related outlaw communities are deeply influenced by discourse, social prejudice and dominant cultural ideologies. Although the films belong to historical periods and cinematic styles they collectively demonstrate how Hindi cinema has repeatedly constructed marginalized nomadic and criminalized communities through stereotypical visual and narrative codes.

The findings indicate that Hindi cinema functions not merely as entertainment but, as a powerful ideological institution that shapes public perceptions regarding marginalized communities. Through recurring signs, symbols and cinematic conventions films contribute to the normalization of myths surrounding criminality, violence and social deviance associated with Denotified Tribes.

7.1 Persistence of Colonial Stereotypes-This study found something important. It shows how ideas from the time when India was a colony are still used in

movies today. The government then made a law that said some groups of people who moved from place to place were born to be criminals. Even though this law was changed after India became independent Hindi movies still show these groups in a light.

When we look at characters in movies who're part of these groups we see that they are often shown as dangerous, violent and a threat to society. They are shown wearing torn clothes carrying guns and knives and living in harsh environments. They are also shown speaking and acting aggressively. This creates an image in people's minds that these groups are bad and should be feared.

These images are repeated over and over in movies. They become a part of what people think is normal. This is what Roland Barthes called "myth-making" where ideas that were created a time ago are presented as facts. Hindi movies often do not question where these ideas came from and instead just repeat them.

7.2 Construction of the "Criminalized other"-This study also found that Hindi movies often show people from these groups as being very different from the rest of society. They are shown as living outside of society in places like forests and deserts and are often portrayed as violent and dangerous.

Using Stuart Hall's theory of representation we can see that movies create a boundary between people who are considered "normal" and those who're not. This boundary is shown through the use of symbols like the contrast between villages and cities and families and nomadic camps. The people from these groups are rarely shown as having personalities or social lives. Instead they are reduced to roles like thieves or rebels. This way of showing people from these groups simplifies the social and historical realities of their lives and erases the diversity of their experiences. The study found that Hindi movies play a role in creating hierarchy by repeatedly showing marginalized groups in a negative light.

7.3 Romanticization and Eroticization of Outlaw Identity- Another finding is that Hindi movies often show people from these groups in a romanticized and eroticized way. They are shown as adventurous, rebellious and fascinating. Also as dangerous and violent. This dual representation reflects the idea of ambivalence, where marginalized groups are viewed with both fear and attraction. Movies like Mujhe Jeene

Do show the outlaw figure as a hero using folk music and emotional storytelling to create a sense of adventure and excitement. However this romanticization is often superficial. Does not address the real social and economic issues faced by these groups. Instead their identity is turned into a spectacle for the audience to enjoy.

7.4 Gendered Violence-The study also looked at how women from these groups represented in Hindi movies. They are often shown in two ways: either as hyper sexualized performers or as victims of violence and oppression. In movies like Bandit Queen Violence against women is a part of the story. While the movie critiques caste and patriarchal oppression it also uses imagery that can be seen as sensationalizing female suffering.

On the hand movies like Sonchiriya provide stronger female characters and more nuanced portrayals of women within marginalized social structures. This suggests a shift towards complex gender representation in recent cinema.

7.5 Shift toward Realism and Humanization in Contemporary Cinema- One of the significant developments in the study is the shift towards more realistic and humanized representation of marginalized groups in contemporary Hindi cinema. Earlier movies like Sholay relied on villainy and mythic criminal imagery while recent movies like Sonchiriya adopt more realistic and socially grounded approaches. Contemporary films depict outlaw characters as products of economic conditions rather than inherently criminal individuals.

This shift reflects changes within Indian cinema influenced by parallel cinema traditions, independent filmmaking and socially conscious storytelling. However traces of imagery and stereotypical coding continue to remain visible even in contemporary narratives.

7.6 Absence of DNT Voices- The study also found that there is a lack of representation of Denotified Tribes in Hindi cinema. Most movies are written, directed and produced by people from social groups resulting in DNT-related identities being represented from external perspectives rather than through lived community experiences. Using Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's concept of the subaltern the study argues that

DNT communities remain largely voiceless within discourse. They appear as objects within narratives rather than active agents capable of articulating their own histories and identities.

7.7 Cinema as Ideological Apparatus- The overall findings suggest that Hindi cinema operates as an ideological apparatus that reflects and shapes social attitudes towards marginalized communities. Movies do not just portray reality; they actively participate in constructing cultural meanings and public memory. Through recurring signs and narrative conventions Hindi cinema reinforces ideas about criminality, caste hierarchy, masculinity and social order. These representations influence audience. Contribute to the continued stigmatization of Denotified Tribes in contemporary India.

7.8 Discussion- The findings of this study demonstrate that the representation of DNT-related identities in Hindi cinema cannot be separated from India's postcolonial history. Cinematic portrayals are shaped by standing systems of power that historically criminalized nomadic and marginalized communities. The study highlights the importance of examining representation politically. Misrepresentation in cinema has social consequences because media narratives influence public attitudes, institutional behavior and collective memory.

VIII. CONCLUSION

This study, "From 'Criminal Tribes to Cinematic Characters" critically examined the representation of Denotified Tribes and related outlaw identities in Hindi cinema. The research explored how cinematic signs, symbols, narratives and visual codes contribute to shaping perceptions regarding communities historically stigmatized under the colonial Criminal Tribes Act of 1871. The study reveals that Hindi cinema has played a role in reproducing colonial stereotypes associated with criminality, violence, nomadism and social deviance. However it also identifies transformations within contemporary Hindi cinema with a shift towards more realistic and humanized representation of marginalized groups. Despite these shifts the study finds that authentic representation of Denotified Tribes remains limited. The voices of these communities remain largely absent

within cinematic discourse reinforcing the argument that subaltern groups are silenced within dominant representational systems. Ultimately the study argues that cinema has the power to either perpetuate injustice or to challenge dominant structures of exclusion. The future of DNT representation, in Hindi cinema depends on whether filmmakers continue to rely on inherited myths of criminality or embrace critical, humane and socially conscious storytelling.

The research shows that the historical criminalization of Denotified Tribes or DNTs continues to influence how people think about them today. Even after the government repealed the Criminal Tribes Act and officially removed the denotification in 1952 people still look down on these communities. This is evident in how the public imagines them how institutions treat them and how the media represents them. Hindi cinema, whether not helps keep this stigma alive by repeatedly showing visual and narrative codes that are associated with old ideas of criminality.

Hindi cinema is not a form of entertainment but it also has the power to shape what people remember and reinforce social hierarchies. The way marginalized communities are represented in cinema has ethical and political implications. If they are misrepresented it can lead to prejudice, exclusion and social invisibility. On the hand responsible representation can foster empathy, awareness and social change.

This research contributes to existing studies by bringing Denotified Tribes into the discussion of film studies and media representation areas where these communities have been largely ignored. By combining analysis with postcolonial and subaltern perspectives the study provides a deeper understanding of how cinematic language constructs marginalized identities and sustains historical ideologies.

The study also opens up possibilities for research. For example further studies can examine the representation of DNTs in cinema, documentaries, online platforms and digital media. Comparative studies involving Dalit, tribal and nomadic identities in Asian cinema can provide broader insights into the politics of representation. Additionally research that involves DNT communities themselves can help bridge the gap between representation and real life.

In conclusion the journey from being labeled "tribes" to being portrayed as characters in cinema reflects an ongoing struggle over identity, memory and representation. Hindi cinema has the potential to either

perpetuate stereotypes or challenge them through critical and humane storytelling. The future of DNT representation depends on the willingness of filmmakers, scholars and society to move beyond inherited myths and engage with the realities, cultural diversity and human dignity of Denotified Tribes. Through inclusive and socially conscious representation can cinema become a medium of justice rather than a continuation of historical marginalization?

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