



Framing Resistance: Cinematic Depictions of Tribal Women's Political Resistance in Bollywood Films

Shalini Kumari 1

1 Research Scholar, Department of Culture and Media Studies, Central University of Rajasthan. Email- kumarishalini579@gmail.com

Nicholas Lakra2

2 Assistance Professor, Department of Culture and Media Studies, Central University of Rajasthan. Email- lakra.nicholas@curaj.ac.in

Abstract-

Tribal women have always played an important role in fighting governmental tyranny, preserving land rights, and engaging in radical political organizations. However, mainstream Hindi film has frequently overlooked their agency, presenting their political participation via pain, victimization, or emotional backstories. This study investigates the portrayal of tribal women participating in political struggle in two major Hindi films, *Lal Salaam* (2002) and *Chakravayuh* (2012). Both films depict tribal women's involvement in Naxalite conflicts, providing a cinematic platform for exploring themes of gender, brutality, and political awakening. The study uses qualitative content analysis to thoroughly evaluate important characters and moments from both films. It examines character development, agency, motives, and narrative placement via feminist and postcolonial theoretical lenses. The study investigates whether these depictions merely emphasize victimization or provide space for indigenous women's political subjectivity. It also looks into whether indigenous women are portrayed as leaders or remain submissive to male revolutionaries. By contrasting these two film depictions, the article demonstrates a contradiction between visibility and simplification: while these women are no longer invisible, their resistance is frequently personalized and depoliticized. The study advocates for more realistic and communal depictions of tribal women's actual responsibilities in India's socio-political conflicts. Bollywood must move beyond simplistic representations of indigenous women and address their complex, collective responsibilities in real-world political movements. Future representations should emphasize autonomy, leadership, and ideological clarity in authentic tribal situations.

Keywords: *Tribal women, Bollywood cinema, political movements, feminist-Postcolonial theory, Representation*

Introduction

Adivasi groups' political struggle has long been a significant but little-known part of India's sociopolitical past. When it comes to protecting their land, culture, and autonomy, Adivasi men and women have been instrumental in everything from military insurgencies to grassroots mobilizations against exploitative land acquisition (Khadia & Gupta, 2024; Rekhari, 2011). In movements like the Naxalite–Maoist insurrection, indigenous women have served as leaders, strategists, and ideological voices in addition to being supporters. According to Chattopadhyay (2016), their political engagement contradicts popular narratives that frequently limit them to the roles of caregivers, victims, or resilient symbols.

Despite these facts, tribal women have historically not been centered as independent political topics in mainstream Hindi movies. Instead, they are often romanticized as "noble savages," exoticized, or predominantly portrayed as victims whose suffering furthers the arc of the male protagonist (Rekhari, 2011; Said, 1978). Their political opposition is framed as reactive and personal rather than proactive and collective, and their narrative agency is limited by interlocking patriarchal and postcolonial biases (Mulvey, 2013; Hooks, 2014). Gayatri Spivak's (2023) groundbreaking concern over the subaltern's ability to be heard is echoed in several films where tribal women's opinions are mediated through non-tribal characters, posing the question of whether they are actually "speaking" in cinematic tales or are being spoken for.

In light of this, two important case studies are Lal Salaam (2002) and Chakravyuh (2012). Both portray tribal women who are actively involved in the Naxalite rebellion, providing a unique chance to analyze the ethnic and gendered aspects of political resistance in Bollywood. Chakravyuh introduces Juhi, a dedicated Marxist fighter whose function is embedded in a male-dominated revolutionary network, whereas Lal

Salaam emphasizes its heroine Rupi's political awakening in response to institutional oppression and personal pain. A comparative examination of narrative techniques, agency, and political subjectivity is made possible by these various depictions.

This study addresses three key questions:

1. How do Lal Salaam and Chakravyuh portray tribal women's involvement in political resistance?
2. Do these representations grant tribal women political subjectivity, or do they reduce their agency to emotional victimhood?
3. What narrative strategies—personal trauma, communal solidarity, ideological discourse—are used to frame their resistance?

The analysis uses postcolonial theory (Said, 1978; Spivak, 2023) to look at the politics of depicting the "internal other" and feminist film theory (Mulvey, 2013; Hooks, 2014) to question the gendered gaze in order to address these questions. The paper helps to understand how Bollywood frames tribal women's resistance—and whether it shifts from symbolic inclusion to authentic, self-determined representation—by placing these cinematic portrayals within the larger discourses of media representation and the subaltern voice.

Literature Review

1. Tribal Representation in Indian Cinema

In Indian cinema, colonial legacies and nationalist ideologies that portray indigenous tribes as the cultural "other" have traditionally influenced how Adivasi communities are portrayed. Tribal characters were frequently portrayed in Bollywood's early post-independence works as symbolic or incidental rather than as fully realized human beings. Films that depict tribal people in highly romanticized, pastoral settings, like Nagin

(1954) and Madhumati (1958), are prime examples of this trend. Although their dances, songs, and costumes gave the story an exotic allure, they hardly ever gave rise to political subjectivity or personal agency (Chattopadhyay, 2016). This is in line with Bollywood's "predominantly stereotypical lens," which portrays tribal civilizations as primitive, enigmatic, or aggressive by nature (Khadia and Gupta, 2024).

This stereotype has an ideological purpose in addition to being aesthetically pleasing. Bollywood, according to Rekhari (2011), produces a "constructed reality" of Adivasi existence that ignores the systemic problems of resource exploitation, land alienation, and governmental repression that characterize tribal experiences in the real world. Tribal identity is frequently appropriated as a decorative cultural element in mainstream films rather than addressing these political and socioeconomic realities. This opinion is supported by Das and Bhardwaj (2024), who point out that tribal portrayal has frequently been "fragmentary," with little incorporation into the main plot other than acting as a setting for the hero's love or moral journey.

Nonetheless, some recent movies have gradually—albeit unevenly—shifted toward more realistic representations. Dewangan (2025), whom observes that contemporary narratives increasingly emphasize the resiliency and agency of tribal characters, shows this shift from caricature to authenticity in both literature and film. However, these representations are still rare, and Bollywood rarely produces movies that show tribal tribes as politically engaged actors, especially tribal women. This scarcity emphasizes how crucial it is to look at Lal Salaam and Chakravyuh as anomalies that make an effort to place indigenous women in narratives of political resistance.

2. Gender and Resistance in Cinema

Hindi cinema's nexus of gender and resistance exposes enduring marginalization trends. Female protagonists are frequently portrayed as love

partners, emotional support systems, or selfless victims rather than autonomous political players, even in movies that focus on political conflict or insurgency (Yadav&Jha, 2023). Kamble and Biswal (2023) point out that marginalized women, particularly those from tribal or Dalit communities, face two distinct disadvantages: the invisibility of lower-caste identities in mainstream media and patriarchal tropes limit how they are portrayed.

The use of personal tragedy, especially sexual violence, as the impetus for women's political participation is a common storytelling technique. This has been criticized by feminist scholars as a way to justify female militancy in patriarchal moral frameworks (Mulvey, 2013; Hooks, 2014). This framing portrays a woman's involvement in armed conflict as an emotional response to personal pain rather than as a logical ideological decision. On the other hand, male characters are frequently portrayed as joining political groups right away out of a sense of collective obligation or ideological commitment. In political narrative, this double norm perpetuates a gendered hierarchy.

Particularly in narratives about insurgencies, women in leadership positions frequently have their storylines linked to those of men. For example, in Chakravyuh, Juhi's political role is established with her romantic relationship with the undercover protagonist Kabir, while in Lal Salaam, a vicious act of police assault sets off Rupi's metamorphosis into a guerrilla fighter. These trends are similar to what Madaan et al. (2017) discovered in their extensive quantitative analysis of Bollywood movies: female characters frequently lack narrative significance, with their actions being framed to assist male-led narratives, even when they have varied screen presence.

This trend has been contested by a few parallel and regional film ventures. Anupama (2023) looks at how Adivasi women are portrayed differently in Malayalam parallel film, showing them

as resilient, culturally anchored, and philosophically lucid. Filmmakers like LeelaSanthosh enable such representations by incorporating indigenous languages and narrative frameworks while also focusing on Adivasi women in their stories. Although these methods are still outside the mainstream of Bollywood, they provide examples of how to fight against racial and gendered erasure.

There is a persistent need for more genuine and independent portrayals, as evidenced by the underrepresentation of tribal women in politically charged Hindi films and the propensity to censor their political awakening through romantic or personal plots. Lal Salaam and Chakravayuhare positioned in this study as locations for examining if these tendencies are contested or reproduced.

3. Feminist Film Theory and the Male Gaze

The "male gaze" theory put forth by Laura Mulvey in 1975 is still a major component of criticisms of the way women are portrayed in movies. Mulvey contends that women are portrayed as passive objects rather than active subjects in mainstream narrative films, which are created for the enjoyment of the male audience. Since their visual framing frequently relies significantly on exoticized depictions—vibrant clothes, beautiful landscapes, and sensual zed physicality—without making an equal investment in their political or intellectual agency, this paradigm is especially pertinent to the representation of tribal women.

Bell Hooks (1992) introduces the idea of the "oppositional gaze," which encourages marginalized viewers to challenge and reinterpret prevailing visual codes, as an extension of Mulvey's paradigm to racial zed contexts. In addition to being gendered, representation for women of color—including Adivasi women in India—is both racial zed and cultural. Both patriarchal and postcolonial marginalization have an effect on their on-screen persona, influencing how they are portrayed and how viewers view them.

According to Rekhari (2011), tribal women's autonomy is essentially diminished since, even in cases where they are assigned speaking roles, non-tribal characters frequently mediate their voices. This supports the data-driven conclusions of Madaan et al. (2017) that, despite narratives that purport to center them, women's representation in Bollywood continues to be disproportionately secondary.

4. Postcolonial Perspectives and the Subaltern Voice

Postcolonial theory provides another critical perspective through which to view representational politics. In his 1978 book *Orientalism*, Edward Said describes how prevailing cultures construct the "other" as foreign, archaic, and in need of control. This reasoning is repeated in the portrayal of Adivasi people in India, where they are frequently presented as remnants of a pre-modern past or as impediments to the advancement of the country.

GayatriSpivak's (1988) inquiry, "Can the subaltern speak?" is especially pertinent when analyzing whether indigenous women in Bollywood are given a genuine voice or if dominant discourses limit their viewpoints. Tilche (2022) emphasizes the function of cultural creation in fending off erasure by examining how Adivasi art and performance can serve as venues for regaining narrative agency. However, these areas of resistance are frequently missing when tribal women are portrayed in mainstream films, as they are frequently substituted by mediated conversations that support the directors' or the main (non-tribal) characters' ideological perspective.

Rupi occasionally expresses her political views and frustrations directly in *Lal Salaam*, providing snippets of subaltern speech. However, her character's path, which is centered on a personal transgression, nevertheless exhibits a narrative economy influenced by prevailing representational standards. Juhi's political speech in *Chakravayuhis* almost entirely contained inside her encounters with Kabir, which begs the question of whether she is given the opportunity to speak

for herself or if she is merely used as a plot device to further the moral development of the male protagonist.

5. Gaps in Scholarship

Few studies explicitly look at the relationship between gender, indigeneity, and political resistance in Hindi films, despite the fact that there is a growing body of literature on tribal communities in media (Chattopadhyay, 2016; Rekhari, 2011; Khadia& Gupta, 2024) and on the representation of women in Indian cinema (Yadav&Jha, 2023; Kamble&Biswal, 2023). Fewer yet closely examine insurgent tales from the standpoint of indigenous women's political subjectivity through textual analysis. Previous research has tended to concentrate on either stereotyping (the enduring use of reductive and exoticized depictions) or invisibility (the exclusion of indigenous women from major narratives). By applying feminist and postcolonial frameworks to two films—Lal Salaam and Chakravayuh—that situate tribal women within the framework of violent political struggle, this dissertation fills that gap. By using feminist and postcolonial frameworks to analyze two films—Lal Salaam and Chakravayuh—that situate tribal women within the framework of violent political struggle, this research fills that gap. By investigating whether these depictions provide ideological clarity, agency, and leadership, this study adds to the discussion of how Hindi cinema presents the voices of subaltern women in political struggle.

Theoretical Framework

This study uses postcolonial theory and feminist film theory as its main analytical frameworks to look at how Bollywood films depict tribal women's political resistance. Especially in situations where women are part of doubly marginalized groups like the Adivasi people in India, these frameworks are chosen because they may critically examine the colonial and gendered legacies present in cinematic narratives.

Feminist Film Theory

Laura Mulvey (1975) introduced feminist film theory, which criticizes the "male gaze" as a structural technique in mainstream cinema, where women are positioned largely as objects of visual pleasure for a male audience who is assumed to be heterosexual. Both the visual framing and the narrative positioning of women—often as submissive, reliant, or incidental to male-led plots—are determined by this gaze. Despite having originated in Hollywood, Mulvey's work has been generally acknowledged for its relevance to Indian cinema (Gokulsing&Dissanayake, 2013). The male gaze is frequently entangled with exoticization while discussing tribal women in Bollywood; the romanticized spectacle is produced by the costumes, dance moves, and natural scenery, but political subjectivity is left undeveloped.

Here, Bell Hooks' (1992) idea of the "oppositional gaze" is especially pertinent since it allows marginalized viewers—including Adivasi women—to actively reject and reinterpret these representations, going against the grain of prevailing narrative codes. This paper examines the framing of the female tribal characters in Lal Salaam and Chakravayuh using feminist film theory:

- Visually — through gaze direction, lighting, outfit design, and camera angles.
- Narratively—by examining whether their political participation is portrayed as an emotional, reactive reaction or as a logical, ideological decision.
- Relationally — by investigating the degree to which male characters mediate or eclipse their agency.

This kind of study makes it possible to determine if the movies support patriarchal visual regimes or give room to a different, more independent female gaze.

Post-colonial theory

According to GayatriChakravortySpivak (1988) and Edward Said (1978), postcolonial theory ex-

amines how cultural narratives create and uphold the dichotomy between the "primitive" other and the "civilized" self. Even though they are citizens of the postcolonial nation-state, Adivasi characters in Indian cinema are frequently portrayed as pre-modern, illogical, and in need of government, according to what Said refers to as Orientalist logic. In order to determine if marginalized voices are given direct representation or are mediated through dominant discourses, Spivak's (1988) groundbreaking question, "Can the subaltern speak?" is essential to this study. Tribal women's voices are often channeled through non-tribal characters, journalists, or government officials in Bollywood insurgency themes, which restricts their narrative agency.

This framework is applied to *Lal Salaam* and *Chakravayuh* to:

- Analyses how the films frame the political resistance of tribal women—whether as legitimate ideological struggle or as disruption to state order.
- Analyze if tribal women's speech and behavior are dictated by them directly or via non-tribal middlemen.
- Examine how the colonial cliché of the "noble savage" and its gendered variations are either reproduced or resisted by the visual and narrative decisions made in the films.

The study offers a comprehensive understanding of how gender, ethnicity, and political subjectivity are negotiated in popular Hindi cinema by addressing the intersectional marginalization of tribal women in cinematic discourse through the integration of feminist critique and postcolonial analysis.

3. Integrative Application

By combining these frameworks, a multi-layered analysis is made possible: While postcolonial theory places these within larger historical and political frameworks of representation, feminist film theory offers instruments for dissecting gen-

dered narrative and visual systems. When combined, they aid in addressing important research questions:

- Are tribal women able to express their political agency in their own words through these films?
- What roles do indigenous women play in resistance movements as framed by narrative and visual structures?
- How much do these representations contradict or uphold colonial and patriarchal stereotypes?

Thus, the theoretical underpinnings guarantee that the research not only recognizes representational patterns but also deciphers their cultural and political ramifications in the context of Indian film as a whole.

Methodology

Research Design

With the objective to investigate how Hindi films depict tribal women's political struggle, this study uses a qualitative research design that blends textual analysis with interpretive inquiry. Finding the meanings, power dynamics, and ideologies buried in cultural texts is best accomplished through qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). This method places more emphasis on contextual understanding, symbolic interpretation, and the researcher's reflective involvement with the subject matter than it does on frequency counts or numerical data.

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2011), qualitative research is a process of situated knowledge production that is influenced by political, cultural, and historical settings rather than just gathering data. Examining movies like *Lal Salaam* and *Chakravayuh*, where representations of tribal women are entwined with India's sociopolitical themes of insurgency, gender roles, and postcolonial identity, makes this especially pertinent.

Film Selection Criteria

The films were chosen through purposive sampling, following the guidance of Neuman (2014) on selecting cases that are information-rich and directly relevant to the research questions. The inclusion criteria required that:

1. The film features a tribal woman character with narrative significance.
2. The plot involves political resistance or insurgency in which the character plays an active role.
3. The film is part of Hindi cinema, released in the 21st century to reflect contemporary representational trends.

The exclusion criteria omitted documentaries, animated films, and those where tribal women appear peripherally without political significance.

Two films met these criteria:

- Lal Salaam (2002) – Directed by Gaganvihari Borate.
- Chakravyuh (2012) – Directed by PrakashJha.

Unit of Analysis

Guided by Neuman's (2014) emphasis on defining clear observational units, this study examines the portrayal of tribal women through:

1. Characterization — Ideological stance, personal agency, and transformation arc.
2. Dialogue — Voice autonomy, ideological clarity, and political articulation.
3. Visual Representation — Costume, makeup, mise-en-scène, and cinematographic framing.
4. Narrative Role — Centrality to the plot and decision-making authority.
5. Symbolic/Material Elements — Cultural props, landscapes, and spatial positioning.

Data Collection and Analysis

In accordance with Denzin & Lincoln's (2011) definition of qualitative inquiry as reflective and iterative, the films were viewed several times, each time concentrating on a distinct analytical facet (e.g., dialogue, narrative structure, visual composition).

The analysis followed thematic coding in three stages:

1. Open coding — identifying patterns, stereotypes, and notable deviations.
2. Axial coding — Linking codes to theoretical frameworks (Feminist Film Theory and Postcolonial Theory).
3. Selective coding — Synthesizing findings into broader thematic categories, such as “personal trauma as political trigger” or “mediated versus direct voice.”

Triangulation was achieved by cross-referencing textual observations with scholarly literature on tribal representation and gender in Indian cinema (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

Ethical Considerations

Throughout, ethical awareness was maintained, despite the fact that this study dealt with cultural representation rather than human individuals. Denzin and Lincoln (2011) highlight the ethical obligation of qualitative researchers to accurately and respectfully portray underrepresented viewpoints. The following individuals used this principle in this study:

- Recognizing the difference between fictional narratives and lived realities.
- Avoiding essentialist depictions of tribal identity.
- Contextualizing cinematic portrayals within socio-historical frameworks.

Analysis

Introduction to Analysis

This study examines at the representation of tribal women's political resistance in two movies that deal directly with insurgency themes in central India: *Lal Salaam* (2002) and *Chakravayuh* (2012). The focus of both movies is on female protagonists whose paths from private lives into political conflict are influenced by patriarchal systems, systemic violence, and the disputed area between rebel movements and the government. The emphasis is on how these women's political subjectivities are portrayed on screen, including through dialogue, visual framing, narrative choices, and interactions with other characters. When taken as a whole, these components show how gender, power, and cultural identity interact in Hindi cinema's portrayal of Adivasi women.

Case Study 1 – *Lal Salaam* (2002)

Rupi's journey in *Lal Salaam* is first defined in the personal realm, including her daily existence in the hamlet, her romantic relationship with Kanna, and her goals of becoming literate. She is positioned in the opening scenes as being somewhat forceful and defying expectations, but mostly beyond the realm of armed political conflict. The change takes place following her police assault, which serves as the catalyst for her development into a proactive member of the Naxalite movement. In keeping with a larger cinematic trend to validate women's activism through personal anguish, the movie exploits this pivotal moment to define political commitment as arising from intensely personal scars.

Her dialogue reflects this transformation vividly. Early lines, such as “Padna mere liyesapnahai” (“Learning to read is a dream for me”), convey a private ambition restrained by structural barriers. Later, when she tells her brother, “Hum chuprahetohaur logon kiizzatbhi loot lenge” (“If we stay silent, they will take away the dignity of others too”), the language shifts from the individual to the collective. This shift in pronoun from “I” to “we” signals a newly assumed political identity rooted in solidarity rather than solely personal grievance.

Rupi's transformation is visually identified by the framing and outfit. Muted, practical clothing appropriate for guerrilla life replaces the vibrant saris and decorations of her early appearances. Her transition from private home settings to vast, untamed woodland settings is reflected in the film's photography, which places her in the actual and metaphorical realm of resistance. Even in this case, her agency is visibly embedded inside a collective rather than a single frame, since the camera frequently positions her with the group rather than as a lone leader.

It's telling how she interacts with non-tribal characters. Although she is respected by some allies, her voice is occasionally mediated by men, especially in settings where ideological arguments are made to external audiences. Even when tribal women are at the center of the narrative action, these mediations allude to a persistent hesitancy in the film industry to let them speak as the only representatives of political reason. Thus, Rupi's agency is evident and essential, but it is frequently filtered through male voices, revealing a deeper conflict in the movie's effort to strike a balance between reality and popular narrative patterns.

Case Study 2 – *Chakravayuh* (2012)

Juhi, the Naxalite leader of *Chakravayuh*, is presented as a woman who is already a part of the armed resistance system. In contrast to Rupi in *Lal Salaam*, her foray into politics is presented as an established position of power rather than as a slow awakening. This is important because she is a crucial tactician who commands and leads her allies in combat rather than just a supporting combatant. Despite this compelling beginning, the movie places her ideological conviction in the context of her own experience as a police rape survivor. Instead of undermining her, the story exploits this to highlight her unwavering resolve, portraying her as a tenacious fighter and a victim of state aggression.

Juhi's language is incisive and assertive, frequently piercing the male-dominated discussions with unwavering clarity. "Insaafkeliyehumneha-thiyaruthayehain, nakikisikimarzipoochnekele" (We have taken up weapons for justice, not to seek for permission) is what she says in one exchange. She is positioned by this type of rhetoric as a political player whose legitimacy is independent of male support. This position is further supported by the film's visual treatment, which rejects the subservient visual coding frequently placed on female protagonists in insurgency narratives by placing Juhi at eye level with male commanders, displaying forceful body language, and having a direct stare.

The conflict with state actors exposes the multi-layered complexity of her role, while her contacts with male revolutionaries are characterized by mutual respect. Because the camera lingers on her face during questioning scenes, capturing a mix of control and rebellion, her political position is inextricably linked to her physical appearance. She is able to express her tactics and her convictions in the film, but the main plot still situates her as a part of the collective rather than as the sole focal point of the story. Leadership shares strategic choices, and although she is a prominent figure, male colleagues frequently have the last say.

Importantly, Chakravyuh depicts Juhi's cause in a way that is morally dubious. Her argument is given room in the story, but it is contrasted with the state's viewpoint to create a discursive balance that may weaken the audience's perception of the legitimacy of her cause. The portrayal of a politically savvy indigenous woman while keeping her inside the moral tension of insurgency as both socially disruptive and justice-seeking is a reflection of a larger cinematic negotiation.

Cross-Film Comparative Insights

Tribal women's political resistance is often sparked by personal tragedy in both movies—Juhi's steadfast resolve after being victimized, and Rupi's metamorphosis after being attacked.

Despite the fact that these experiences are based on actual instances of social and state violence, their utilization in films runs the risk of portraying women's political identities as reactive rather than essentially ideological.

Juhi starts off with more narrative authority than Rupi in terms of agency, but both face the narrative constraint of shared or mediated decision-making. Juhi's authority is more established but still restrained by the ensemble structure of insurgent leadership, whilst Rupi's autonomy expands but is visually and narratively linked to male-led activities.

While Chakravyuh largely eliminates this in favor of a more militarized visual identity, Lal Salaam relies more heavily on visual tropes of tribal identity through costume, landscape, and cultural props, placing Juhi more in line with the archetype of the guerrilla fighter than the exoticized tribal woman. However, there are still romanticized moments in both situations, whether as a result of the idealized camaraderie of the group effort or the poignant framing of personal loss.

A delicate balance between spectacle and political realism is maintained in both films. Although the main political grievances are based in identifiable socio-political facts, combat scenes and picturesque rural settings run the risk of aestheticizing violence.

Cross-Film Comparative Insights

Hindi cinema's continuous struggle to represent marginalized women in political circumstances is shown in the portrayals of Lal Salaam and Chakravyuh. On the one hand, these movies challenge clichés of victimization and passivity by giving indigenous women greater room to act, speak, and resist than previous mainstream depictions. On the other hand, they continue to adhere to well-known representational techniques, such as focusing women's political awakening on personal victimization, presenting them as important combatants but infrequently as undis-

puted leaders, and integrating their voices into systems that are controlled by men.

Conclusion

The analysis of Chakravayuh (2012) *Lal Salaam* (2002) shows that the portrayal of tribal women participating in political resistance in Hindi cinema resides in a realm of both advancement and constraint. In contrast to the historically common portrayals of tribal women as silent, incidental, or merely symbolic, these films give them active parts in insurgent tales, enabling them to express their complaints, defend their beliefs, and engage in armed conflict.

The investigation does, however, also highlight recurring representational patterns that limit their agency. Personal tragedy is the foundation of both Rupi's and Juhi's political identities, indicating that suffering rather than early intellectual commitment are frequently necessary for women's action to have cinematic credibility.

The movies also demonstrate several approaches to narrative and visual framing. While Chakravayuh mostly eliminates this in favor of militarized iconography, placing Juhi more in line with the character of the guerrilla fighter, *Lal Salaam* relies on anthropological and cultural markers to place its protagonist inside a recognizable tribal identity. The conflict is sometimes romanticized and other times grounded in social reality as both

approaches deal with the conflicting forces of political realism and cinematic spectacle.

These portrayals, taken as a whole, are representative of Hindi cinema's careful handling of politically delicate themes. Although they show a desire to humanize rebellious figures and highlight women's involvement, they fall short of completely recognizing their political agency outside of the contexts of group struggle and individual grievance.

Future stories should enable tribal women characters to enter political arenas via intellectual conviction, community leadership, or strategic skill—rather than only through personal victimhood—in order for film to progress toward more equal and accurate portrayals. In order to allow them to lead without mediation, filmmakers should also give them narrative power that is on par with or even higher than that of their male counterparts. Such depictions would challenge long-standing gendered and cultural hierarchies ingrained in cinematic storytelling in addition to reflecting the range of Adivasi women's real-life experiences.

Thus, although *Lal Salaam* and *Chakravayuh* signify significant changes in representation, they also highlight the ongoing task of tearing down the narrative frameworks that restrict the complete manifestation of tribal women's political subjectivity on the Hindi screen.

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