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Tribal Narratives on Screen: A Study of Stereotypical Semiotics in Tamil Films Viduthalai Part 1 & 2

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Abstract:

This paper considers the way in which modern Tamil cinema portrays tribal communities, with reference to Viduthalai Part 1 and Part 2. It pays attention to the signs and symbols which filmmakers make to get a perception of tribal identity, oppression, and marginalization. Indian cinema seldom allows tribal communities a fair and correct representation, and this is an issue that has been raised by critics over the years. This study excavates the particular signs and symbols that these films operate with to narrate the lives, struggles, and identities of the indigenous people.

Historically, tribal groups in India have been driven to the periphery, where they experience a social and economic pressure. That reality is common in movies, but there are occasions when, rather than the reflective power of a culture and its capabilities, movies merely reiterate the wide-worn-out clichés of tribes as pathetic victims or exotic outsiders. Viduthalai is one that is working that line; the movie foreshadows oppression and resistance by the tribes, but it also demonstrates that it is not an easy task to depict disenfranchised individuals in a cinematic world realistically. The unique thing is that it is a tendency: such movies tend to reveal the tale of tribal suffering and resistance in the form of victimization and sacrifice without any stories of strength and endurance. With the help of the works of film studies and studies about the problems of cultural representation, this paper locates these presentations within the overall context of how the Indian society and film industry tend to treat the tribal populations. Semiotics assists in decomposing all this. Using the analysis of the pictures, symbols, and the types of characters used in these movies, it can be said what indeed is getting through. Viduthalai relies on stereotypes of old, with its main focus placed on oppression and the lack of more empowering points of view. Such a narrative confines tribal identities to a very small trap and casts genuine questions with regard to authenticity and morality. The article brings the discussion to the next level, denouncing the risks of these stereotypes and asking filmmakers to make much more individual and deep films on tribal life in India. Such signs and signals are not only essential to study, but also, it is about cultural awareness, social justice, and responsible storytelling. This study urges an improving way: telling stories that not only repeat tired clichés but also actually glorify the variety and richness of tribal cultures. Film is a need that affects people within the way of thinking, policy formulation, and even brings a change in the real treatment of a tribe to the rest of the world. Ultimately, this study is not only a critique but also a form of call to reconsider the way in which cinema can be culturally ethical and truthful in terms of its qualities to depict any identity.

Keywords: Tribal representation, Tamil cinema, Semiotics, Stereotypical portrayals, Cultural identity, Viduthalai films.

1. Introduction:

The Semiotics of Marginalization: Tribal Representation in Viduthalai Part 1 & 2

Being a matter of media studies, it can be observed that indigenous communities in Indian cinema are almost never presented fairly and correctly, a fact that was already being raised many years ago. Films do not exist solely to entertain; they define the perception of oneself and other people. This paper will feature the picture of tribal people in Tamil movies, with a particular emphasis on the movies Viduthalai Part 1 and Part 2. These are movies that leave much to unravel in the bid to identify the signs and symbols employed by filmmakers to tell the story of the life of the indigenous, their struggles, and identities.

In India, tribal groups have been constantly relegated to the periphery and must deal with various forms of social and economic problems. This fact is frequently reflected in movies, but there is a prerequisite: sometimes, the movies only serve to recycle the same old concepts, where tribes are portrayed as powerless victims or exotic outcasts, rather than as strong and cultured entities.

Viduthalai walks that line. The films bring the oppression of the tribes and their determination to the center, yet they reveal how difficult it is to portray oppressed people with their true face in popular cinematography. This raises difficult questions: What are the obligations of the filmmakers to their subjects? To what extent does the cinema influence the thinking of ordinary citizens regarding tribal identity?

Semiotics will help to deconstruct these elements. Upon a closer examination of the images, symbols, and types of character used in these films, one can very easily understand what is really going through the messages. These facts are also connected with bigger ideas of cultural representation and post-colonial identity in this paper. The gap in the Indian film studies is very wide and cannot note down those hidden connotations and meanings of the presentation of tribal folk especially in the Tamil films.

Suffering and war are the new reality and the veracity of actual communities as full-fledged and messy as it seems two-dimensional. This paper suggests a better solution the telling of stories that are not the regurgitated stereotypes, but rather the celebration of diversity and enrichment of tribal cultures. This is important since films affect how people think, the policies made and even how tribal groups are treated in reality. Criticism of the signs and symptoms of such films is not merely an academic agenda, but a critical issue of both cultural consciousness, social responsibility, and responsible narration.

The Problem with the "Outsider" Lens:

In the case of Indian cinema, the theme of the tribal Other is something that lingers throughout the history of cinema. Tribal communities are often portrayed as the noble savage, which coexists with nature, or the ultimate of the primitiveness that needs to be wiped out by the massive presence of

industrialization. This prism is nearly always that of the outsider. Such a presentation makes these cultures less complex, as Ramachandran (2021) notes, leading to the repetition of the same stories and making the process of further marginalization of these cultures an easier task in society.

This is evident specifically through the application of the forest in Viduthalai. The forests are not merely scenery; they are elements that signify the isolation of the tribe as a whole. In most cases, the tribal characters are not the primary agents of action. Instead, they are portrayed as resisting external forces such as the government, industry, and social injustice and are therefore framed as victims who are never on the winning side of power. While this arrangement successfully pulls at the "heart-strings," it often lacks a connection to the truthfulness of these people's lives in all their richness and variety. The script further extends these archetypes to extremes through its characters: the wise but helpless old man, the young and innocent sufferer, and, in certain situations, the rebellious fighter. This characterization remains a "thin sheet," narrowing the focus to suffering and warfare rather than highlighting the strength or the innovativeness of the community.

Theoretical Framework: Semiotics, Post-colonialism, and Ethics:

To the college students, semiotics can be a handy tool used to examine the ways in which films can influence the perceptions of culture, identity and power. Barthes (1972) believes that the meaning is produced and exchanged by a system of signs, of which the images and sounds that viewers watch in cinemas are components. Each sign has signifier (the image or the word) and a signified (the concept or mental image to which the signifier is directed). This enables a discussion on how the films construct cultural messages, especially to the demographics who have very little or no control over how they are portrayed. In Viduthalai, visual elements like tribal clothing, rituals, and sceneries are made to be authentic. But these signs often tend to draw back to a story of victimization. As an illustration, when tribal women are being undressed by the police, it is used as a signifier of the power of the state and also a show of dominance. Deprivation of clothing turns into the extreme of deprivation of dignity, security, and power.

Post-colonial Identity and Modern Cinema:

Post-colonial identity theories support this work by attempting to understand how films reproduce narratives in a world still grappling with colonial remnants. Rather than offering new perspectives, these films often present old colonial, patriarchal, or cliché tropes with a modern twist. The exposure of bodies whether women or elders renders them as the "Other" or as individual's incapable of making their own decisions. In this context, the bodies of the indigenous characters become fields of play for old power structures. It is also done by the media in the film; reporters are zooming in on the injured and dramatic scenes, they use the interviews but the interviewees are not those who narrate the events. Although the cameras give a panoramic picture, the viewfinder rarely captures the real tribal voice. According to the post-colonial criticism, the tribal experience as

interpreted by the press is in the prism of an outsider who characterizes the indigenous people as victims or threats.

The Ethical Responsibility of the Filmmaker:

This analysis leads to an essential ethical consideration. A movie that converts real torture, such as police brutality or sexual humiliation, into entertainment risks a dangerous transition. Instead of enlightening the audience, it may evolve into a melodramatic response to trauma that continues wearying insinuations, potentially adding to the harm without honesty or goodwill.

Nair and Pillai (2020) claim that filmmakers must weigh ethical considerations carefully, noting that unconscious stereotyping fails to acknowledge the strength and complexity of these groups. It is stated that the audience as well as the objects of the narrative should be engaged in the process of storytelling which assumes the existence of opposition, cultural pride, and community. Although the themes of native wisdom, a powerful connection to the land are mentioned, on a larger scale, these meanings are misplaced and miscovered within the story of misery. The biggest question of ethics is still, is the film questioning the system, or is it just repeating the things that have been said before, about the power holders?

Conclusion of the Research Intent:

This project is not merely an academic task but a call for enhanced cultural awareness and social justice. The study aims to define the major symbols that construct tribal identity and determine whether films strengthen or reverse existing stereotypes. By exploring the signs and signals in Viduthalai, the research examines the moral factors filmmakers should consider. This reflection will help to further comprehend the impact of films on the culture-related and identity-related perception, and hopefully transform the discussion and force filmmakers to make more dynamic narratives based on the real-life experience of a marginalized group.

2. Review of Literature:

1. Ramachandran (2021): The Persistence of the "Othering" Lens

The study of Ramachandran plays a central role in determining the antiquity baggage carried by the films like Viduthalai. In this view, the depiction of indigenous people is not a mere creative decision but a subtle way of othering that is depriving these groups of their humanness and multi-dimensionality. Since the early 20th century, Indian cinema has been dominant in the way the tribal experience is refracted through the eyes of an outsider so as to make it appear either savage or exotic. The tribal character is hardly a protagonist with his own agenda in modern day big-budget movies. Rather, they are often used as the background music to underline the adventure of the hero or the unhuman nature of the villain. The lessons of Ramachandran allow to gain a primary idea of the way Viduthalai makes use of tribal environments. Although the movie tries to hold a visual line of realism with the use of clothing and setting, the story does not reflect the essence of the lived-in experience.

This can be clearly seen especially through the description of forest scenes. Instead of being depicted as a residential section with its unique culture, the forest is a special, violence-ridden region. Such attention to the exoticism or the poverty of tribal existence makes sure that these groups of people are still viewed as naturally different to the rest of society. Finally, despite a movie trying to be sympathetic, it can have a negative effect in case it only acts to put the society in a stereotype box.

2. Sumita S. Chakravarty (2019): National Identity and the Politics of "Imperso-nation"

The research methodology of this study is guided by the work of Ghosh, who examines how visual semiotics the study of signs and images constructs an identity within the mind of the viewer. Ghosh posits that media does not merely represent reality; rather, it constructs a specific code that viewers learn to decipher. In this framework, elements such as clothing, unkempt hair, or specific dialects function as markers of marginalization or "backwardness." Ghosh cautions that these codes are often so potent that they may substitute for reality in the audience's perception. Applying Ghosh's framework to Viduthalai reveals how filmmakers employ visual shorthand to signal that characters are oppressed. These images serve as "markers" of tribal identity, consistently presenting characters in states of distress or physical helplessness. Ghosh's work assists in demonstrating that such homogeneous visual decisions form a stereotypical semiotic, leading viewers to associate tribal identity exclusively with suffering. This connection is essential to the study: it illustrates how stereotypes are constructed through the visual appearance of the film. Ghosh's framework provides the necessary academic vocabulary to deconstruct the process of "coding" victimhood in individual scenes, proving that the portrayal is not merely a story but a deliberate visual creation.

3. Ghosh (2020): Visual Semiotics and the Construction of Marginalized Identities

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4. Krishna Kumar (2022): Identity Politics and the Democratic Space of Tamil Cinema

Krishna Kumar provides a localized perspective on the Tamil film industry, discussing the shift from the promotion of caste pride to a platform that enables the voices of the anti-caste and the marginalized to be heard. However, an important contradiction is noted: despite the increased democratization of this space, narratives often remain inclined to follow archaic patterns of power. Kumar observes that films concerning marginalized groups are usually formulated by those who do not belong to those groups, creating a gap between the intended message and the actual achievement. This framework is applicable to an analysis of Viduthalai. Kumar's work helps explain the symbiotic association between politics and film in Tamil Nadu, positioning Viduthalai as a subset of a larger trend in "progressive cinema" that faces a dilemma regarding the depiction of the "Other." It is argued that the majority of resistance films do not truly challenge existing power structures; instead, they depict the oppressed as being "chronically fractured." Through this lens, it can be concluded that while Viduthalai represents an effort to champion the rights of tribal communities, it does so in a way that places excessive attention on their plight. Consequently, the focus on their inherent power is lost. The inclusion of Kumar's localized insights ensures that the study explores not only general Indian film tropes but the specific political realities of Tamil cinema.

5. Nair and Pillai (2020): The Ethics of Representing Trauma

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3. Research Methodology:

To conduct a profound analysis of how Viduthalai Part 1 and Part 2 approach tribal identity, a methodology has been developed that transcends a simple examination of the narrative. This study

explores the "hidden language" of the films moving beyond a standard movie review toward a methodological deconstruction of the signs, symbols, and power structures that define how an entire community is introduced to the global audience.

Aim of the Study:

The primary mission of this study is to reveal the versus semiotics perpetrated in Viduthalai Part 1 and 2. The research seeks to discover the ways in which the films apply visual and narrative shortcuts to create a specific image of tribal life. Although these films purport to be stories of liberation and justice, the study interrogates whether the cinematic execution actually functions as a mechanism that keeps tribal characters trapped in a "victim-victim cycle" and a state of permanent "otherness."

Scope of the Study:

This paper is particularly an analysis of the Viduthalai duology by Vetrimaaran. It concentrates on these movies as they represent a "new wave" of Tamil cinema focusing on grave social issues. Thematic Scope: The study is interested in visual semiotics (costumes, hair, body language), spatial semiotics (the representation of the forest versus the city), and narrative semiotics (identifying who is permitted to speak and who is relegated to the role of a mere victim). Conceptual Scope: The research is based on Semiotic Theory (Barthes) and Postcolonial Identity Politics. Limits: The study does not review all Tamil movies ever produced on tribes; instead, it performs a deep dive into these two specific films to provide a detailed and high-quality analysis that general studies cannot impose.

Research Objectives:

To maintain the focus and brevity of this research, the following four objectives have been determined:

- To pinpoint the most frequently applied visual and narrative indicators used to manifest the idea of tribal identity in Viduthalai Part 1 and 2.
- To examine how these signs construct a narrative of victimhood and whether this distorts the agency and culture of the community.
- To weigh the ethical aspects of using extreme trauma and humiliation as a storytelling device when representing a marginalized community.
- To juxtapose the cinematic representation of tribal existence with real socio-political conditions in order to determine where stereotypical loopholes exist.

Research Questions:

These core questions are designed to move beyond the surface of the films:

RQ1: How do the films apply particular semiotic elements (clothing, settings, rituals) to signal "tribalness" to the audience, and are these elements authentic or stereotypical?

RQ2: What is the effect of the repetitive depiction of trauma and physical pain on the spectator's perception of tribal strength and endurance?

RQ3: How is the tribal experience filtered through the "outsider's lens" (the camera and the director's perspective), and whose voice is truly being privileged in the narrative?

RQ4: Can a film truly be liberating when it relies on established semiotic codes of marginalization and "othering" to narrate its story?

4.Theoretical Framework:

To deconstruct the layers of the Viduthalai duology, this study moves beyond narrative analysis to investigate the mechanics of meaning. THE proposed research is based on two pillars: Semiotic Theory and Postcolonial Identity Theory. This theoretical synthesis makes possible a discourse of the ways the films create visual images and the meaning of these images in terms of the preservation of tribal dignity.

1. The Foundation: Roland Barthes' Semiotic Theory:

The analysis relies mainly on the ideas of Roland Barthes namely Signifier, Signified and Myth. In Viduthalai, the elements in the screen do not occur by chance but they are indications that the audience is trained to perceive. The Signifier (The Image): This is the pure visual information like the texture of the saree of a tribal woman, barefoot prints in the mud of the forest or even the picture of a character being undressed by the police. The Signified (The Concept): This is the cognitive idea that the signifier will induce. In these movies, markers of tribal existence are virtually solely linked with imagination of weakness, primitivism and agony.

The Myth: According to Barthes, the repetition of specific signs leads to their naturalization and the creation of myths. This study argues that a "Myth of the Perpetual Victim" is constructed in Viduthalai. By relentlessly presenting tribal characters as passive subjects of action—individuals who are tortured, displaced, or saved—the film reduces tribal identity to a myth of powerlessness. This model demonstrates that stereotypical semiotics are not merely artistic decisions but a system of signs that confines tribal identity to a marginalized category.

2. The Lens: Postcolonial Identity and "The Other":

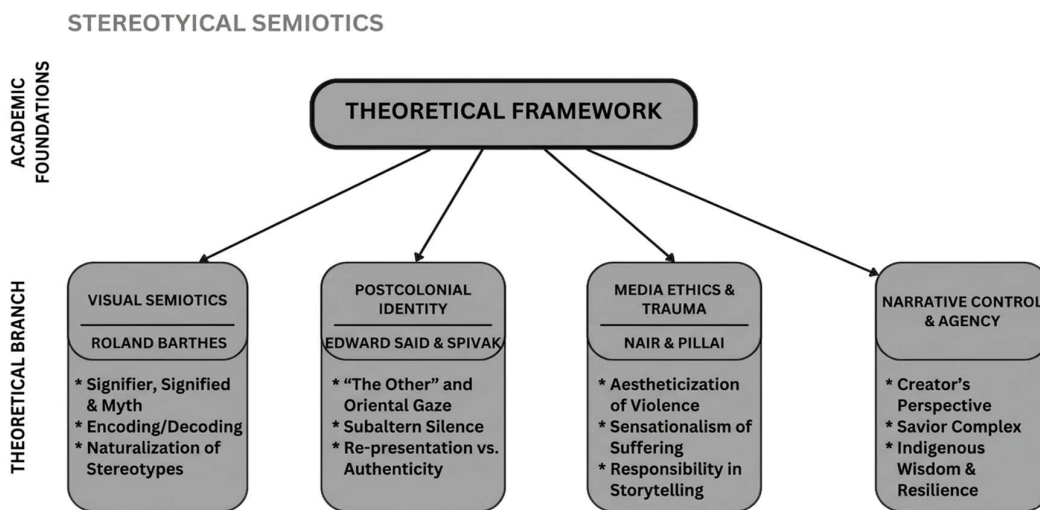
Whereas semiotics describes how the image is constructed, the Postcolonial Theory (based on the writings of Edward Said and Gayatri Spivak) discusses the power relationships behind it. This paper explores the othering practice in the Tamil cinema. The Gaze of the Outsider: The camera in Viduthalai plays the role of an outsider. Although it is sympathetic in its motives, it views the tribal group as something different, primitive, or exotic. This indicates a postcolonial conflict in which the oppressed are being portrayed but seldom given the power to use their voices to give representation to themselves. Subaltern Silence: The main question of Spivak, Can the Subaltern Speak, is central to this postulation. The tribal characters are often muted by the storyline; their bodies are used to depict the state violence, their cultural ideologies and inner abilities are pushed aside to the periphery. The theory is used to analyze how the films put more emphasis on the spectacle of suffering, rather than

logic of resistance.

The Synthesis: Stereotypical Semiotics:

The integration of both theories has enabled the study to use a particular conceptual lens, which is known as Stereotypical Semiotics. This framework studies the intersection of visual signs and power politics based on the following dimensions: Spatial Semiotics: The forest is not simply studying the place where visual signs meet but as the signifier of exclusion. It shows it as a place where the law has no dominance, further supporting the principle that tribal people are beyond the modern civilization. Corporeal (Body) Semiotics: Tribal body is said to be a locus of trauma. The repetitive symbolism of physical humiliation plays a semiotic purpose, enlightening the viewers that tribal identity is characterized by innate absence of a lack of particularly of power and protection. Narrative Agency: The analysis is based on the idea of Signifying Power distribution. In Viduthalai, the police/ political rebels hold the center stage and the tribal villagers serve as the punch lines/ passive objects of action.

Why This Framework?



While the majority of film research prioritizes narrative and plot, this framework adopts a more rigorous approach by treating the Viduthalai duology as a semiotic battleground. By synthesizing Barthesian decoding with postcolonial theory, the study demonstrates how films characterized as well-intended may remain semiotically oppressive. This framework moves beyond binary evaluations of "good versus bad" representation, focusing instead on a sophisticated assessment of how cinema contributes to the subconscious perception of indigenous identity.

Research Design:

A Qualitative Research Design is employed in this study because the quality and subtle meaning of tribal image are important than a quantitative frequency of appearances. To achieve a comprehensive understanding, the methodology employs Exploratory and Descriptive Research techniques. Given the limited academic work currently available regarding the semiotics of Viduthalai,

this design is constructed to identify previously unexamined visual codes and explain their influence on the construction of social reality.

The core study design in this research is Semiotic Content Analysis that explains the films as a series of aesthetical writings to be decoded in a three stage process. The initial step is the Data Immersion in which both parts of the duology are read more than once in order to find which signifiers are recurring, i.e. bare feet, traditional clothes, the particular cinematic arrangement of the forest. The second phase involves Thematic Coding where the identified signs are put into analytical categories, such as Signs of Victimhood, Spatial Marginalization and State Power. The last level is Interpretive Analysis in which these visual codes are incorporated into the theoretical framework to transcend literal images on-screen and question what those images represent. This structure illustrates the way the gaze of the camera is combined with the structure of the story to create a stereotypical semiotic and makes it easier to critically analyze and see beyond the shallow plot what is happening with the power dynamics in contemporary Tamil cinema. Although semiotics offers the language to interpret the way an image is put together, the Postcolonial Identity Theory based on the works of Edward Said and Gayatri Spivak puts these images into the context of the larger power relations. This paper focuses on how othering has taken place in the Tamil cinema, with the Outsider Gaze, in which it is the tribal community that is considered archaic or, more fundamentally, different, and the Subaltern Silence, where the tribal bodies are used as locations of state violence without making much attention to their own agency.

Film Selection and Justification:

The Gaze of the Outsider: The camera is an observer in the movie Viduthalai. Despite the fact that the story is trying to work in favor of the community, it views the tribal group as something essentially different, archaic, or exotic. This is quintessentially a classic postcolonial dilemma, in that the oppressed are spoken on their behalf, but seldom given a chance to speak in their own voice. The question of Can the Subaltern Speak, which is the main question of Gayatri Spivak, is the core of this postulate. The plot often swamps tribal characters in silence; the bodies of such characters are used to render the brutality of the state, as their individual cultural ideology and inner abilities are pushed to the back. This theory is utilized to analyze how the movie is obsessed with spectacle of suffering in comparison to logic of resistance.

The Summing up: Stereotyped Semiotics. Integrating the two theories resulted in the creation of a specific conceptual lens, namely Stereotypical Semiotics. This paradigm analyzes where the visual signs and the power politics meet.

Spatial Semiotics: The forest is not only a location, but it is a signifier of exclusion. It is portrayed as a place where the law is unimportant which enhances the effect that tribal people are not part of the modern civilization.

Corporeal (Body) Semiotics: Tribal body is said to be a locus of trauma. The repetitive symbolism of physical humiliation is semiotic in nature and it tells the viewer that tribal identity is an innate quality

lacks power and protection per se. Narrative Agency: The paper analyzes the proprietorship of Signifying Power. As the police or political rebels are likely to take a dominant role in the direction of the action in Viduthalai, the tribal villagers are likely to be the passive participants in the action.

Data Analytical Parameters and Process:

In order to make sure that the academic soundness and understandability of this study, an analytical parameter set has been created in order to serve as the filters of interpreting Viduthalai Part 1 and 2. These parameters make it easier to deconstruct the film into separate units of meaning, past a normal narrative experience. The following standards influence the analysis: Visual Semiotics and the Look of Identity: The parameter categorizes visual indicators that can be seen, including the peculiarities of the wearing of traditional clothes and bare feet and messy hair. Following physical conditions like bruising and dirt, it can be proven that the film uses a visual shorthand which programs the viewer to automatically think tribal identity and poverty and lack of social standing. Spatial and Environmental Marginalization: This criterion focuses on the connection between the people and the surrounding such as the way the forest is positioned to oppose the state spaces such as the police station or the city. Based on the lighting and the camera angles, the research concludes whether the forest is presented as a Sacred Home of empowerment or a War Zone of exclusion. This enables the analysis of the environment as an indicator of the existence beyond the shelter of the modern law. Corporeal Autonomy and the Spectacle of Trauma: This parameter tracks the depiction of tribal bodies, namely, marking out the Spectacles of Trauma like the sequence of stripping or assault. Through analyzing the degree of suffering to the expressed strength, the study concludes on whether the characters have agency or whether they are simply being acted upon by the state as a major agent of building the stereotypical semiotic of the victim. Narrative Agency and the Silenced Voice: This filter analyzes how information and dialogue are controlled. It explores the possibility of tribal villagers being the so-called Silenced Subalterns at the cost of police or political leaders controlling the discourse. This can be used to determine gaps in narrative agency whereby the cultural philosophy and internal strength of the tribe is subordinate to a mainstream political narrative.

Archetypal Flattening and Character Boxing: This parameter represents the simplification of tribal members into stereotypical positions, e.g. the Innocent Victim or the Wise but Helpless Elder. Identifying such archetypes, the study illustrates that the film can use tribal people as a symbol or a prop to promote the plot of the main character instead of complex people. To make the application of these parameters systematic, key scenes are chosen and are filtered using a combination of all filters at the same time. The discussion goes beyond literal events to question what is implied by dress, place, silence, and suffering. Such a method shifts the study off the subjective opinion to the formal semiotic audit. Through mentioning certain frames in Viduthalai, the study can find out precisely how stereotypes are produced, which grounds the criticism of the progressive claims of the film.

4. Data Analysis and Interpretation:

The analytical parameters developed in the previous sections are used in this section on the most important sequences of Viduthalai part 1 and Part 2. The analysis of narrative events is stretched further to examine how the film creates a certain image of tribal identity using signs and symbols. A three-fundamental analysis is arranged in three centrally important scenes of data, which are the visual and narrative pillars of the duology. Each sequence is described in the study, the five parameters which are established are applied, and finally a synthesis of outcomes is provided to reveal the existence of stereotypical semiotics.

Data Point 1: The Systematic Humiliation of Tribal Women:

Scene Exploration: Early in the first film, in an operation called Operation Ghost Hunt, the police army invades a hamlet of a tribe. They are in need of information concerning the rebel leader, Perumal (Vathiyar). The police take things to the extreme where the villagers claim to be ignorant. The scene concludes with the mass-de-clothing of the village tribal women. The camera is kept low and obtrusive, paying attention to the horror on their faces and the physical nakedness of their bodies made to stand in the open and be the victims of the scare of the officers, and the viewers too.

Application of Parameters:

Visual Semiotics and the Look of Identity: In this series, the visual analysis of the tribe community is reduced to signs of excruciating suffering. Unkempt hair, ripped sarees, or dust covered skin are no exceptions; they serve as the signifiers of complete absence of protection of the institution. The movie literally deprives characters of their clothes, and in this way, the film deprives them of social rank and also eliminates the multidimensional aspects of their identity, leaving them with the bare bones, the primitive body. The Signified here in this semiotic construction is the tribal identity as violably inherent body.

Spatial and Environmental Marginalization: The village, which is ideally the place of refuge, becomes the place of punishment. Spatial arrangement of the police being on a higher elevation and the women being kept in a small, circular area below depicts that the tribal home is not a sovereign space. Rather, it is presented as a territory which can be usurped and violated by the state at any time.

Corporeal Autonomy and the Spectacle of Trauma: In the parameter of Agency vs. Passivity, there is a total imbalance in the narrative to passivity. A tribal body is the instrument that is used to show state cruelty. Although the aim is to provoke the disgust of the viewer towards the police, the semiotic effect is that it will turn tribal women into an object of sympathies. Their bodies turn into a spectacle and this confirms them that tribal existence by definition is a place of trauma.

Narrative Agency and the Silenced Voice: The conversation in this scene makes no progress to the narrative, the women are limited to shouting, pleading and crying. They are vocal in their pure emotions and reactions, and the logic of the courses is controlled by the orders of the police. This entrenches the image of the Silenced

Subaltern, which implies that the tribal people are unable to speak their plight, only perceiving the physical pain of the same. Archetypal Flattening and Character Boxing: The women in this series are pushed into the stereotypical role of an Innocent Victim. Individual character development is lacking; they are individual archetypes of The Oppressed. By simplifying them to this one-dimensional form, the movie does not show them as complex figures with their own experiences and means of resistance. Result of Application: The Vulnerability Myth. The use of these filters indicates the formation of a Vulnerability Myth. The movie, by using mass stripping as a major signifier, promotes the stereotype of the powerlessness of tribal communities as an unintentional effect. Despite being a commentary on power, the semiotic ending invites the observer to make a correlation between tribal identity and social disgrace and demeaning. This creates a Hierarchy of Gaze in which the humiliated Other is viewed by the outsider audience, which has an inadvertent dehumanizing impact on the community.

Parameter	Application to Scene	Semiotic Outcome
Visual Semiotics	Torn sarees, disheveled hair, and physical exposure used as primary signs.	Vulnerability Code: Equates tribal identity with a body that lacks social protection.
Spatial Semiotics	The village center is transformed into a "punishment zone" dominated by police.	Desecration of Home: Signals that tribal spaces are not sovereign or safe from state intrusion.
Corporeal Autonomy	100% Passivity; the women are "objects" of the police's actions and the audience's gaze.	Spectacle of Shame: Turns systemic oppression into a visual "shocker" for mainstream viewers.
Narrative Agency	Communication is limited to screams and weeping; no articulated dialogue from the victims.	Silenced Subaltern: Reinforces the idea that the marginalized can only feel pain, not explain it.
Archetypal Boxing	Women are flattened into a collective group of "Innocent Victims."	Identity Erasure: Individual stories are lost to serve a singular narrative of trauma.

Table 1: Semiotic Audit of Data Point 1 (The Mass Stripping)

Data Point 2: The Physical Breaking of "Vathiyar" (The Leader)

Scene Explanation: In Viduthalai Part 2, the focus is set on the seizure and interrogation of Perumal (Vathiyar). This is the leader of the opposition against the tribe, a teacher, and a strategist. However, a lot of the film is dedicated to him being in the police custody. He is also portrayed to be

chained and flogged not to mention that he is physically weakened. His old scarred body is given a lot of time and shadowed by the greatness of his body against the current physical incompetence.

Application of Parameters:

Visual Semiotics and the Appearance of Identity: The visual markers of Vathiyar are bifurcated into two distinct states: the Wise Teacher and the Broken Prisoner. In the former, he is signified by simple attire and the presence of books; in the latter, he is depicted bare-chested, saturated with blood and dirt. This bloodied signifier suggests that even the most intellectual or political significant member of the tribe is finally brought down to the level of flesh by the state apparatus. This supports the semiotic idea that tribal power is by definition temporal and stampedes under pressure with ease.

Spatial and Environmental Marginalization: The story transports Vathiyar out of the vast free forest into the small dark underground cell. The spatial displacement represents the natural man as the victim of the civilized space of the interrogation room. However, by depriving him of his environmental base, the film creates an Other not fitting into the modern world implying that he is only tolerated when not seen or in prison.

Corporeal Autonomy and the Spectacle of Trauma: It might be true that the story is trying to depict the psyche of Vathiyar as being very strong; however, the image is so obsessed with his physical malady. His constant allusion to Spectacles of Pain runs the danger of making his opposition secondary to the gut imagery of a rotting body being tortured. The semiotic outcome is a replacement in which Sign of Strength is surpassed by Sign of Agony. The Narrative Agency and the Silenced Voice: Vathiyar is often undercut by the narrative of the main character, the policeman Kumaresan, though he is saying his revolutionary philosophy. Vathiyar is functionally degraded into a role of mentor archetype whose main role is to instigate the moral awakening of the mainstream hero. This is a symptom of a stereotypical semiotic in which the marginalized leader is only present to provide the spiritual or ethical point of the main character.

Archetypal Flattening and Character Boxing: Vathiyar is pushed aside to the icon of the Prudent and Powerless Old Man. He is highly educated and he has no agency to stop suffering himself. This forms a traditional power dynamic, wherein the viewer is also encouraged to admire the intellect of the character, and at the same time sympathise with his mutilated body, keeping the viewer and the subject in a hierarchical relationship.

Result of Application: The Narrative of Broken Resistance. The use of these parameters indicates a Broken Resistance tale. The film provides a subtextual message of equating resistance to extreme suffering by providing semiotic precedence to the torture of the leader compared to his political or social achievements. Vathiyar is no longer a symbol of empowerment and it turns into a symbol of the cost of rebellion. This helps to perpetuate a more general stereotype that tribesmen are doomed to become martyrs and not triumphers.

Parameter	Application to Scene	Semiotic Outcome
Visual Semiotics	Shift from the "Teacher" (books/shirts) to the "Prisoner" (blood/shackles).	Erosion of Status: Visually demonstrates that indigenous authority is easily physically crushed.
Spatial Semiotics	Movement from the expansive forest to a claustrophobic, dark interrogation cell.	Civilization as Torturer: Posits the contemporary world as a non-cooperative realm of tribal leaders.
Corporeal Autonomy	Intense focus on the physical pain of an aging body during torture sequences.	Pain of Agency: The Sign of Strength is changed with Agony of Suffering.
Narrative Agency	Vathiyar's philosophy is secondary to the moral awakening of the mainstream hero (Kumaresan).	The Mentor Prop: The tribal leader exists only to facilitate the development of a non-tribal character.
Archetypal Boxing	Fits the "Wise but Helpless Elder" box intellectually high but physically powerless.	Myth of Martyrdom: Suggests that tribal resistance is noble but ultimately destined for defeat.

Table 2: Semiotic Audit of Data Point 2 (The Breaking of Vathiyar)

Data Point 3: The Forest as a Dark "No-Man's Land"

Explanation of the Scenes: The two movies revolve around the forest as a place of setting. However, it is barely portrayed on the daytime or as a residential place (farming, celebrations, children playing). Instead, the woods are almost always shown either at night or at night time with the aid of the night-vision glasses which the police are using. It is a dim, dungey and violently dark space.

Application of Parameters:

Analysis below puts the parameters of the research into the spatial and environmental semiotics of the forest and how the setting is used in itself as a feature of marginalization in the Viduthalai duology. Visual Semiotics and the Look of Identity: The forest in this paradigm is coded as one that is intrinsically tribal. Thick vines, mud, and darkness are all visual representations that are always aligned to tribal characters. Since the forest is given semiotically the role of visual chaos and danger, these attributes are attributed to those who live in the forest. Via this connection, the society is aesthetically wild-ed, and they identify with the wilderness of the environment. Spatial and Environmental Marginalization: As the setting is analyzed, it is evident that the forest is seldom presented as the place of Home, rather, it is presented as the place of Hideout. The film strengthens the postcolonial idea that tribal space is uncivilized and therefore, in need of the state intervention, even though it may be the

corrupted variant of it. The Spectacle of Trauma and Corporeal Autonomy The forest serves as an institution where bodies vanish. There is a common depiction of tribal people disappearing in the mud or disguised behind trees. This reflects their physical ability in the field, but at the same time, removes their semiotic distinctiveness. They become part of the landscape as elements of the forest and not objects of a society. Narrative Agency and the Spoken Voice: The voice of the forest in such movies is made up of gunshots, screams, and sirens of police. The voice of culture like the tribal songs, oral history, or even a daily conversation is conspicuously missing. This silence all broken by state-imposed or retaliatory violence corroborates the idea that the tribal life in itself, beyond the struggle with the state, does not have an inherent content. Archetypal Flattening and Character Boxing: The community is communally put in the “Exotic/Dangerous Other box. Since they are pictured only in the conditions of the gloomy forest and active war, they are abbreviated into Forest People. This takes away their identity as modern citizens with rights to politics, gluing them to a naturalized, closed identity that does not relate them to the modern world. Application Consequence: The De-territorialization of Identity. These parameters are used to strengthen a stereotype that the life of tribes is buried in the past and only characterized by isolation. The film creates a semiotic distinction between the civilized world and the tribal forest by invoking the forest as the zone of incessant confrontation as opposed to the domestic life of the forest. This leaves it even harder to the viewer to see the community as an acceptable element of the modern national landscape.

Parameter	Application to Scene	Semiotic Outcome
Visual Semiotics	Use of night-vision, shadows, rain, and mud to depict the landscape.	Wildness Association: Transports the "chaos" of the environment onto the character of the people.
Spatial Semiotics	The forest is never a "home" with culture; it is always a "hideout" or a "battlefield."	Exclusion Zone: Frames tribal land as a "No-Man's Land" existing outside modern law and logic.
Corporeal Autonomy	Tribal bodies blend into the mud/foilage, making them "part of the scenery."	Naturalization: Erases individual humanity by turning people into "objects" of the landscape.
Narrative Agency	The "voice" of the setting is limited to violence (gunshots/sirens), not cultural life.	Cultural Silence: Erases the everyday lived reality of the tribe, leaving only the war.
Archetypal Boxing	The community is boxed as the "Exotic/Dangerous Other."	De-territorialization: Strips the community of modern political identity, boxing them into the past.

Table 3: Semiotic Audit of Data Point 3 (The Forest Environment)

Findings of the study;

The following section is the synthesis of the Research Objectives (RO) and the Research Questions (RQ) to show the particular findings that were uncovered during this study. Analyzing each of the objectives in the context of the questions asked, one can see the logic behind Viduthalai Part 1 and Part 2. This synthesis would represent the intersection of theory with the screen in which the visual language used in the film can often overrule its signs of progressive narrative.

RO1: Identifying the Primary Visual and Narrative Signs

Applied: RQ1 & RQ3

In the answer to RQ1, the research establishes that the movie uses extremely narrow visual indicators, such as bare feet, dirty clothes, and "unpresentable-look as the main symbols of tribalness. These are not realistic information at all; they serve as semiotic shortcuts. Or by continually identifying tribal identity with these particular qualities of poverty, the film acquires a lack of social status as natural. The viewer is trained to believe that being tribal means being denied which then establishes the strict brand image that does not accommodate the modern or multifaceted portrayal. The Influence of the Outsider Gaze (RQ3) When implementing RQ3 to these results, one can note that these signs are chosen on the basis of an Outsiders Gaze. The result of this employment is that the tribal people are defined in terms of utter negativity (what they have lacked, shoes, clean clothes, modern housing, etc.), rather than what they actually have (a different culture, a self-governing philosophy, an affinity to the land). This forms an aesthetic difference that literally is able to isolate and put the community in an otherness causing isolation and othering of the community even at the start of the narrative.

RO2: Analyzing the Construction of the "Victimhood" Narrative

Applied: RQ2 & RQ4

When the questions on power and liberation are used on the RO2, the following phenomenon can be seen, which is what this study refers to as a Traumatizing Loop of Trauma. Combining this with RQ2 and RQ4, the study reveals how the completion of suffering that the film is obsessed with in fact constitutes the destruction of the title, Viduthalai (Freedom).

RO2 RQ2: Spectacle of Suffering. When answering RQ2, the research establishes that the physical suffering, in particular, the mass stripping and sadistic interrogations, is physically imposed continuously to break the tribal power. The latent logic of narrative is a fallacy of the more we are exposed to pain, the more we discover that it is true. But the semiotic outcome is different, the tribal character is turned into a professional victim before the audience. The movie has succeeded in filling the screen with trauma, which makes the key emotional bond that the viewer has with the community be the feeling of pity instead of admiring their sovereignty. This results in a cycle in which the identity of the character is fully absorbed by the fact that he or she is a victim of the state.

RQ4: The Change of Direction Paradox of a Narrative of Liberation. With the introduction of

RQ4, another important contradiction arises, namely: how can a movie called Freedom be free when its visual language is devoted virtually to the subject of hushing? The critique indicates that it is impossible. The culture of victimhood is so widespread that it drowningly crashes into the real community that it is supposed to embody. The result of such application is a Stereotypical Loop. When a spectator watches the duology, the image of misery is likely to be remembered by the spectator much better than the reason behind resistance. This shows that in spite of its progressive motives, the movie is still confined within the precincts of the mainstream cinematic thought whereby the subjugated body is treated as a traumatized site to promote a mainstream political agenda.

RO3: Evaluating the Ethics of Representing Trauma

Applied: RQ3 & RQ2

As an answer to RQ3, the paper considers the question of what voice to take precedence in the most traumatic moments of the film. The results are that the tribal voice is hardly ever heard as an eloquent or a philosophical voice, but rather it is a Scream or a Cry. These utterances are emotional appeals that are meant to enable a mainstream audience to feel some form of moral outrage. Nonetheless, this film decision prevents the tribal characters to make sense of their trauma in terms of their cultural or psychological requirements. They are harvested to feed the emotional experience of the audience instead of giving an insight into the experience of subalterns. Using RQ2 to this ethical dilemma, the study indicates that resiliency of the community is conceptualised as a passive sustenance and not a strength. The ethical price of such framing is high: it turns some historical pain of the real world into a movie show. This brings about what is what we can refer to as a Gothic Mode of story telling. In this mode, the Other (tribal community) is represented either as a place of horror and pity. Their misery is not a goal in itself, neither a springboard to their own emancipation, but rather a device of the plot in order to bring the moral growth of the non-tribal hero. The background noise on which the mainstream protagonist discovers his conscience is the trauma of the community itself.

RO4: Comparing Cinematic Portrayal with Socio-Political Realities

Applied: RQ4 & RQ1

When it comes to RQ4, the research question inquired whether or not the semiotic codes taken in the movie are fairly representative of the political agency of indigenous activists in India. The findings indicate that there is a strong divergence: although in the real world things run in movements, philosophical, and they take the real action in the contemporary activism, the visual language of the film shows otherwise. Since the production is based on the Semiotics of the Exotic Other (as discovered in RQ1), it is tied to a dark forest of the past. The outcome of this application is a De-territorialized Identity. In the movie, the tribal people are isolated into two distinct semiotic spaces: the depth into the forest of primitivism, or the inner area of a police station. The film unintentionally continues the postcolonial perception that they are primordial human beings by not showing them as contemporary

political participants, with their own intricate and sovereign ideologies. As the synthesis shows, presenting the community as a functionally archaic entity, the narrative logic presupposes that they have to be either saved by the foreigners or civilized by them. This reminds the colonial Civilizing Mission, where the less powerful are the passive subject who waits to be influenced by a more developed protagonist. The conclusion of this study is that, though Viduthalai criticizes the state power, it does not disrupt the semiotic links that maintain the tribal identity as centerless in the modern national and political environment. The society is still an indicator of past resentment instead of a contributor to the development of today.

Research Objective	Filtered Through	Final Research Outcome (My Perspective)
RO1 (Signs)	RQ1 & RQ3	The Branding of Lack: Tribal identity is visually reduced to poverty and "otherness" through an outsider's lens.
RO2 (Victimhood)	RQ2 & RQ4	The Trauma Loop: The focus on suffering erases agency, making "liberation" impossible within the film's own code.
RO3 (Ethics)	RQ3 & RQ2	Spectacle over Dignity: Marginalized pain is used as a narrative tool for mainstream emotional impact, silencing the actual voice.
RO4 (Reality)	RQ4 & RQ1	Political Erasure: The film boxes the community into a "wild" past, ignoring their modern status as active political citizens.

Table 4: Consolidated Summary of Research Outcomes

5. Conclusion:

This study has been done through a stern analysis of a historic occurrence in the contemporary Tamil cinema. A critical question that motivated me to start looking at Viduthalai Part 1 and 2 is: is a film which supposedly aims at representing the marginalized one, in fact, liberating them, or is it trapping them in a new cycle of visual and narrative servitude? This study has gone beyond the superficial realism due to a strict semiotic audit that has managed to excavate a more profound form of Stereotypical Semiotics. The paper ends with a contradiction in the very core of the progressive character of the movie; the power of the argument used in the movie against the corruption of states cannot be overlooked, but the question of how it is told is still a problem. The Visual Signs (RO1) helped me to find a Branding of Lack, where tribal identity can only be recognized by bare feet, dirty skin and physical helplessness. It forms a kind of semiotic formula that defines the concept of tribalness as synonymous with primitive barbarity and that when the degree of progressiveness is gauged by the degree of pain displayed the subject of the discussion becomes the first casualty.

The greatest finding of this study is the analysis of the Victimhood Narrative (RO2). The movie makes the audience conditioned to view the marginalized as weak individuals by placing emphasis on the Spectacle of Trauma to the Sign of Agency. This causes the Trauma Loop wherein the character only becomes pertinent to the narrative when he or she is in pain. Their power is encapsulated as passive submission to be admired by the degree of pain that they can sit through as opposed to the degree of change they can bring. Therefore, when the credits appear the spectacle of misery becomes more vivid to the viewer than the reason of resistance. This ethical violation implies that modern social justice film production is now at the phase of Gothic, where the Other considered as the marginalized is the space of horror in which the mainstream audience reacts with a moral response. The film is a highly successful silencing of the subject by the use of the "Scream" to filter the tribal experience instead of the "Sentence," which affirms a tragedy to the tribe and leaves the conscience to the non-tribal hero.

Lastly, there is a vivid De-territorialization of tribal identity as per the research. The film deprives the community of its modern political citizen privileges by placing the forest as a dark and lawless No-Man-Land. Actually, the indigenous groups are organized, philosophical and fighting to have contemporary rights, but, in the movie, they are stuck in an exotic past that should be redeemed or studied by the foreigners. This paper does not deny the aesthetic values of Viduthalai but demands a greater degree of representative morality. Voyeurism is just a new name on voyeurism. Recognizing these indicators of semiotic servitude the subdued voice and the mutilated body this study gives directions to those who break the cycles. It is only when the marginalized are no longer treated as sites of pain that we will have the true Viduthalai (Freedom) in cinema where they are depicted as complex, up to date and strong people.

Research Objective	Filtered Through	Final Research Outcome (My Perspective)
RO1 (Signs)	RQ1 & RQ3	The Branding of Lack: Tribal identity is visually reduced to signs of poverty and "otherness" through an outsider's gaze.
RO2 (Victimhood)	RQ2 & RQ4	The Trauma Loop: The focus on suffering erases agency, making "liberation" a hollow concept within the film's code.
RO3 (Ethics)	RQ3 & RQ2	Spectacle over Dignity: Marginalized pain is used as a narrative tool for mainstream impact, silencing the actual voice.
RO4 (Reality)	RQ4 & RQ1	Political Erasure: The film boxes the community into a "wild" past, ignoring their modern status as active political citizens.

Table 5: Consolidated Summary of Research Outcomes

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