

## Knowledge against Power: Education and Resistance in *Jai Bhim*

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**Abstract:** This paper gives a postcolonial reading of the film *Jai Bhim*. It studies how oppression still affects marginalized tribal communities even after India gained independence. The paper uses ideas from thinkers such as Frantz Fanon and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. The study examines how the Irular community is shown in the film as a subaltern group. They face injustice through systems like the police and law enforcement. These institutions often misuse their power against marginalized people. The story of Sengeni shows a woman's strong struggle to find justice for her husband. At the same time, advocate Chandru helps her through legal action. Their efforts show the conflict between power and resistance in a society that often ignores the voices of the poor and oppressed. By analyzing the characters and the story of the film, the paper argues that knowledge, legal awareness, and education can bring social change. These elements help people challenge systems of oppression. Finally, the paper concludes that *Jai Bhim* highlights the importance of education. Education becomes a powerful tool that helps marginalized communities gain justice, dignity, and social empowerment.

**Keywords:** Postcolonialism, *Jai Bhim*, Irular community, Subaltern, Marginalization, Resistance, Justice, Education, Legal awareness, Empowerment.

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### Introduction

Cinema is a powerful medium that shows social realities and questions injustice in society. Through stories, characters, and visual images, films can show the experiences of marginalized communities. They also reveal the inequalities that exist within society. In this context, the Tamil film *Jai Bhim*, directed by T. J. Gnanavel, is an important film. It highlights issues such as caste discrimination, institutional violence, and the struggle for justice faced by tribal communities in India.

The film is based on real events involving the Irular tribal community in Tamil Nadu. This community has faced social exclusion, poverty, and discrimination for many years. Even after India gained independence, many marginalized groups still suffer from domination and injustice. Institutions such as the police, law, and bureaucracy sometimes continue systems of inequality. These systems silence and exploit vulnerable communities.

Postcolonial theory helps us understand these issues. Scholars like Frantz Fanon, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, and Edward Said explain that the effects of colonial domination still exist in modern societies. These effects appear through institutional power, cultural hierarchies, and the silencing of marginalized voices. Spivak's idea of the "subaltern" explains how oppressed groups are often denied the chance to speak within powerful social systems. From this perspective, *Jai Bhim* is not only a courtroom drama but it is also a strong criticism of the systems of oppression that affect tribal communities. The film focuses on Sengeni's struggle to find justice for her missing husband. It also shows the

role of advocate Chandru, who uses the law to reveal injustice within the state system.

This paper argues that *Jai Bhim* exposes the persistence of colonial power structures within contemporary institutions and illustrates how education, legal knowledge, and social awareness empower marginalized communities to challenge systemic oppression and seek justice.

### Research Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this research are:

- To examine *Jai Bhim* through the framework of postcolonial theory.
- To analyze the representation of marginalized tribal communities as subaltern groups within the film.
- To explore how institutional systems such as policing and law reflect continuing colonial patterns of domination.
- To investigate the role of knowledge, legal awareness, and education as tools of resistance against systemic oppression.
- To highlight the film's message that education and awareness are essential for empowering marginalized communities.

### Research Questions

This study seeks to answer the following questions:

- How does *Jai Bhim* reflect the persistence of colonial power structures within modern institutions?
- In what ways are tribal communities represented as subaltern subjects within the narrative?
- How does the film portray institutional power and systemic injustice?
- What role do knowledge, legal awareness, and education play in challenging oppression in the film?
- How does the film emphasize education as a means of empowerment and social transformation?

### Features of Postcolonialism

Postcolonialism is a critical approach that studies the effects of colonial rule. It looks at the cultural, political, social, and economic impacts of colonialism. It also studies how formerly colonized societies respond to colonial domination. Postcolonialism explains how colonial power still influences identity, knowledge, and institutions.

#### 1. Resistance to Colonial Power

Postcolonial literature shows the struggle of colonized people against imperial rule. It explains how oppressed communities resist political, cultural, and intellectual control.

#### 2. Recovery of Native Identity

Colonial rule suppressed many native cultures, languages, and traditions. Postcolonialism tries to recover and protect native identity, history, and cultural pride.

#### 3. Critique of Eurocentrism

Postcolonial thinkers question the idea that European culture and knowledge are superior. They criticize Western views about colonized societies and expose the bias in colonial writings.

#### 4. Hybridity

Hybridity means the mixing of cultures and identities. Because of colonial contact, colonized societies often develop identities that combine both native and colonial influences.

#### 5. Language and Power

Language is an important issue in postcolonial studies. Writers may reject the colonizer's language, change it creatively, or mix it with native words. In this way, language becomes a tool of resistance.

#### 6. Subaltern Voices

Postcolonialism focuses on the voices of marginalized people. These include peasants, tribal communities, women, and lower castes. Their experiences were often ignored in history.

#### 7. Representation and Stereotypes

Colonial writings often described colonized people as primitive or inferior. Postcolonial studies challenge these stereotypes and show how they supported colonial rule.

#### 8. Psychological Impact of Colonialism

Colonialism affected the minds of colonized people. It created feelings of inferiority, identity crisis, and cultural alienation.

#### 9. Rewriting History

Postcolonial writers retell history from the perspective of colonized people. They try to correct the distorted versions written by colonial historians.

### 10. Power and Knowledge

Postcolonial theory studies how knowledge can be used as a form of power. Education, literature, anthropology, and history were often used by colonial powers to control colonized societies.

### Methodology and Theoretical Framework

This study adopts a qualitative textual analysis of the Tamil film *Jai Bhim* through the framework of postcolonial theory. Postcolonial criticism examines how colonial patterns of domination continue to shape modern institutions and social relations. The analysis draws upon the theoretical ideas of thinkers such as Frantz Fanon and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak to understand the representation of marginalized communities and institutional power.

The study focuses on four key postcolonial concepts that guide the analysis of the film.

#### Subaltern Voices:

The concept of the subaltern, developed by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, refers to socially and politically marginalized groups whose voices are often excluded from dominant power structures. In this study, the Irular tribal community is examined as a subaltern group whose experiences of injustice are largely ignored by institutions.

#### Resistance to Power:

Postcolonial theory highlights the struggle of marginalized communities against oppressive systems. The film is analyzed to understand how Sengeni's search for justice and advocate Chandru's legal intervention represent acts of resistance against institutional authority.

#### Power and Knowledge:

Following postcolonial discussions of power and knowledge, the study examines how legal awareness and education function as tools that challenge systems of domination. The courtroom scenes in the film are analyzed to show how knowledge of law exposes injustice and empowers marginalized individuals.

#### Institutional or Colonial Power Structures

The analysis also investigates how institutions such as the police and administrative systems reflect continuing colonial patterns of domination. Through this lens, the film is interpreted as a critique of neo-colonial forms of power that continue to marginalize vulnerable communities.

Through these analytical concepts, the study explores how *Jai Bhim* represents the struggles of marginalized communities and highlights the transformative role of knowledge, law, and education in resisting systemic oppression.

#### Postcolonial Theory: Power and the Subaltern

Postcolonial theory studies the effects of colonial rule on societies and cultures. It examines how power continues even after political independence. Many countries became independent from colonial rule, but the systems of power created during colonial times often remained. These systems influence social structures, institutions, and attitudes toward marginalized communities.

According to Edward Said, colonial powers controlled not only land but also knowledge and representation. They created images of colonized people as inferior or uncivilized. This helped

them justify domination and control. Even after independence, these ideas sometimes remain in social institutions. Another important thinker is Frantz Fanon. Fanon explains that colonial systems often continue through violence and authority. Institutions such as the police, courts, and administration may still treat marginalized communities with suspicion and hostility. As a result, the oppressed continue to experience injustice. The concept of the subaltern is central to postcolonial studies. The term refers to groups that are socially, politically, and economically marginalized. These groups have very little power in society. Their voices are often ignored or silenced.

The scholar Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak discusses this idea in her famous question, "Can the subaltern speak?" She argues that marginalized people are often unable to express their experiences within dominant systems of power. Their stories are either ignored or misrepresented. In many societies, tribal communities, lower castes, and poor populations are treated as subaltern groups. They lack access to education, resources, and legal protection. Because of this, they remain vulnerable to exploitation and injustice. Postcolonial theory therefore helps us understand how power operates in modern societies. It shows that oppression does not end with political independence. Instead, it often continues through institutions and social hierarchies. In this context, the film *Jai Bhim* can be examined as a narrative about the struggle of the subaltern against institutional power. The Irular tribal community in the film represents a marginalized group whose voices are ignored by the authorities. Their struggle reflects the continuing inequalities that postcolonial theory seeks to expose.

### **Institutional Power as Neo-colonial Authority**

Postcolonial theory explains that colonial systems do not completely disappear after independence. Many structures created during colonial rule continue to exist in modern societies. These systems often keep unequal power relations between dominant groups and marginalized communities. Institutions such as the police, courts, and administrative systems were created during colonial rule to control people. Even after independence, these institutions sometimes continue to function with the same attitudes of authority and domination.

Frantz Fanon explains that colonial power can continue through institutions. These institutions may produce violence, discrimination, and inequality. Because of this, marginalized communities often continue to face oppression. In *Jai Bhim*, the police institution represents this kind of authority. The tribal community is treated with suspicion and prejudice. The police believe that members of the Irular community are criminals. This belief shows the deep social bias that exists in society.

The film shows how the police use their power to threaten and silence marginalized people. Instead of protecting citizens, the institution becomes a tool of oppression. The tribal people cannot easily challenge this authority because they lack education, social status, and legal awareness. This situation shows a neo-colonial pattern of power. Neo-colonialism means the continuation of colonial forms of domination in an independent country. In such systems, oppressed groups remain powerless, while institutions protect the powerful. Through this portrayal, *Jai Bhim* shows how institutional power can act like a modern form of colonial authority. The film exposes the injustice faced by marginalized communities. It also highlights the importance of awareness, education, and legal empowerment.

### **Sengeni as the Voice of the Subaltern**

In postcolonial theory, the subaltern refers to people who are socially and politically marginalized. These groups have very little power in society. Their voices are often ignored by authorities and institutions.

In *Jai Bhim*, Sengeni represents the voice of the subaltern. She belongs to the Irular tribal community, which is one of the most marginalized groups in society. The community suffers from poverty, discrimination, and social exclusion. At the beginning of the film, Sengeni and her husband live a simple life. They depend on small jobs for their livelihood. They do not have education, wealth, or social status. Because of this, authorities do not take their problems seriously. When Sengeni's husband is arrested and later disappears, she begins a difficult search for the truth. Many people ignore her complaints. The police refuse to listen to her. She is treated as if her voice has no importance. This situation reflects the idea explained by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. She says that the subaltern often cannot speak within systems of power because their voices are not recognized. However, Sengeni does not remain silent. She continues to fight for justice even when she faces many obstacles. Her determination shows resistance against oppression. Sengeni's struggle brings attention to the suffering of marginalized communities. Through her character, the film shows the courage of people who challenge injustice even without power or privilege.

Thus, Sengeni becomes a strong voice of the subaltern. Her persistence challenges the silence imposed by institutions and demands dignity, recognition, and justice.

### **Knowledge and Law as Instruments of Resistance**

Postcolonial theory explains that knowledge can challenge systems of power. People who control knowledge often control society. When marginalized people gain knowledge, they can question authority and demand justice.

In *Jai Bhim*, knowledge and law become important tools of resistance. The Irular tribal community does not have access to education or legal awareness. Because of this, they are easily exploited by institutions such as the police. The character of advocate Chandru represents the power of knowledge. He understands the law and uses it to expose injustice. Through legal arguments and evidence, he challenges the authority of the police and reveals the truth about the disappearance of Sengeni's husband. The courtroom becomes a place where knowledge challenges power. The law, which is often used by institutions to control people, is now used to protect the oppressed. This shows that knowledge can change systems of domination.

Frantz Fanon explains that oppressed people must resist injustice and challenge systems of power. One way to do this is through awareness and knowledge of their rights. In the film, Chandru's legal help allows Sengeni and her community to speak against oppression. His knowledge of the law gives strength to people who were earlier powerless.

Thus, the film shows that knowledge and legal awareness are powerful tools of resistance. They help marginalized communities fight injustice and work towards dignity and equality.

### **Education as Liberation**

Education is a powerful tool for social change. It helps people understand their rights and question injustice. In

postcolonial theory, education is seen as a path to empowerment and freedom.

Many marginalized communities remain oppressed because they do not have access to education. Without education, they may not know their legal rights or how to challenge authority. This makes them easy targets for exploitation. In *Jai Bhim*, the Irular tribal community does not have many educational opportunities. Because of this, they know very little about the legal system. They depend on others to speak for them. This shows how the lack of education keeps marginalized people powerless.

The film also shows the importance of awareness and learning. When people understand the law and their rights, they can resist injustice. Education gives people confidence and the ability to question authority. Postcolonial thinkers say that education can break the cycle of oppression. It helps marginalized communities gain social and political power. Through education, people can challenge discrimination and demand equality. In the film, education becomes a symbol of freedom. It represents knowledge, awareness, and empowerment. When marginalized communities gain education, they are no longer silent or powerless.

Thus, *Jai Bhim* highlights the importance of education as a path to liberation. It shows that education can change lives and help oppressed communities fight for justice and dignity.

## Conclusion

A postcolonial reading of *Jai Bhim* shows that colonial patterns of power still exist in modern institutions. Even though India has gained political independence, many marginalized communities still face injustice and discrimination. The film shows how institutions such as the police and administrative systems sometimes silence and oppress vulnerable groups, especially tribal communities.

Through the story of Sengeni and her search for justice, the film shows the suffering of marginalized people. Her determination shows the courage of those who refuse to accept injustice. The role of advocate Chandru also shows how knowledge and legal awareness can challenge oppression and reveal the truth.

When the film is viewed through the ideas of postcolonial thinkers such as Frantz Fanon, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, and

Edward Said, it becomes a strong criticism of institutional power and social inequality. It shows that the struggle of marginalized communities is not only a fight for justice but also a fight to be heard and recognized in society. At the same time, the film gives hope by highlighting the power of knowledge, law, and education. Education helps people understand their rights and question injustice. It gives marginalized communities the strength to raise their voices and claim dignity.

Finally, *Jai Bhim* delivers a strong message that education is the path to liberation and empowerment. Education creates awareness, builds confidence, and improves a person's personality. It helps individuals think clearly, act responsibly, and contribute to society. In this way, education becomes not just a way of learning but a force that transforms individuals and society. It becomes the foundation for justice, equality, and human dignity.

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