

# SHAPING NARRATIVES:

TAMIL CINEMA AND ITS RENDITION  
OF WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT: AN  
AVENUE FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

Dr. G Radha | Dr. P Panbuselvan

Volume I



# **Shaping Narratives: Tamil Cinema and its Rendition of Women's Empowerment - An Avenue for Social Change**

**Edited by**

**Dr.G.Radha / Dr.P.Panbuselvan**



Indian Council of  
Social Science Research

**Shaping Narratives: Tamil Cinema and its Rendition of Women's Empowerment - An  
Avenue for Social Change**

Editors: Dr.G.Radha / Dr.P.Panbuselvan

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**VOLUME I**

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## **Foreword**

### *Message from the Principal's Desk*

It is with immense pleasure and a sense of scholarly camaraderie that I extend my warm appreciations for having published the proceedings of the ICSSR sponsored national seminar, "Shaping Narratives: Tamil Cinema and its Rendition of Women's Empowerment - An Avenue for Social Change".

Cinema, as a powerful medium, holds the potential to shape societal perceptions and attitudes. In this context, Tamil cinema, with its rich history and cultural influence, provides a compelling lens through which we can explore the multifaceted dimensions of women's empowerment and its portrayal on the big screen.

This national seminar aimed to foster intellectual discourse, encourage critical analysis, and promote a nuanced understanding of how Tamil cinema, over the years, has been a dynamic force in shaping narratives around women's empowerment. The diverse range of papers presented in this publication reflects the depth and breadth of the discussions that took place during the seminar.

As we navigate the pages of this publication, we embark on a journey that offers valuable insights that vividly contribute to our understanding of the intricate relationship between cinema and societal transformation.

I extend my heartfelt appreciation to the organizing committee, the authors, and the reviewers for their meticulous efforts in ensuring the scholarly rigor of this publication. I am sure that the insights shared within these pages will inspire further research, critical discourse, and a renewed commitment to advancing the cause of women's empowerment.

May this publication serve as a catalyst for continued exploration and dialogue, fostering a deeper understanding of the transformative potential of cinema in shaping narratives that empower and uplift women in our society.

With warm regards

Dr.D.Brindha

Principal

## **Foreward**

### *Message from the Secretary's Desk*

Dear Distinguished Participants, Scholars, and Guests

In the vast landscape of academia, events such as the ICSSR sponsored national seminar, "Shaping Narratives: Tamil Cinema and its Rendition of Women's Empowerment - An Avenue for Social Change" play a pivotal role in fostering intellectual exchanges and shaping scholarly discourses. The response to the call for papers, which sought conceptual, empirical research presentations, and case studies, was overwhelming, reflecting the collective enthusiasm and dedication of our academic community.

As we leaf through the pages of this publication, we embark on a literary journey that encapsulates the myriad perspectives and insightful analyses shared by our esteemed contributors. The diverse array of themes explored within the framework of Tamil cinema's portrayal of women's empowerment is a testament to the multifaceted nature of this dynamic relationship.

I extend my gratitude to the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) for their invaluable support, enabling us to host this intellectually enriching seminar. Their commitment to advancing the frontiers of social science research aligns seamlessly with our college's ethos of promoting academic excellence and knowledge dissemination.

A special word of appreciation goes out to our esteemed authors, whose research papers have contributed to the intellectual vibrancy of this publication. Your dedication to advancing our understanding of the intricate interplay between Tamil cinema and societal change is truly commendable.

I look forward to witnessing the impact of this publication on the academic landscape, and I express my sincere hope that it sparks further curiosity and investigation into the transformative potential of cinema in shaping narratives that resonate with the spirit of empowerment.

With warm regards

Dr.T.Kannaian

Secretary

## **Foreward**

### *Message from Vice Principal's Desk*

With a profound sense of enthusiasm and eager anticipation, I am honoured to contribute a few words to the preface of this exceptional book woven into the fabric of an upcoming cinematic masterpiece that intricately captures the essence of our educational odyssey through the ICSSR-Sponsored One-Day National Seminar “Shaping Narratives: Tamil Cinema and its Rendition of Women's Empowerment – An Avenue for Social Change”. As the Vice Principal of PSG College of Arts & Science, I am honoured to have the privilege of observing the evolving storyline, vividly illustrating the dynamic interaction between academia and the world of cinema.

Education embarks on a multifaceted and profound voyage, and this collaboration between literature and film offers a rarefied vantage point from which to contemplate the transformative odysseys that sculpt the lives of both our students and educators. The cinematic medium, with its unparalleled ability to imbue words with vitality, serves as a potent amplifier for the voices of those fervently dedicated to knowledge and personal growth within the hallowed confines of our institution.

Within the pages of this tome, readers will immerse themselves in a rich and multifaceted tapestry of film narratives, anecdotes, and profound insights, reflective of the myriad trials and triumphs encountered within our esteemed academic community. As the film masterfully captures these poignant moments with visual eloquence, its reverberations are poised to resonate deeply with audiences far beyond the confines of our campus, transcending geographical boundaries to ignite the hearts and minds of individuals across the globe.

In humble acknowledgment of the tireless dedication, I extend my heartfelt appreciation to Dr. P.Panbuselvan, Organising Secretary, and Dr. G. Radha and team, Department of Visual Communication whose steadfast commitment has brought this ambitious project to fruition. May this seamless fusion of academia and cinema serve as an enduring beacon of inspiration, eloquently illustrating the profound and enduring influence that education holds in shaping the trajectory of our shared future.

With warm regards

Dr.A.Anguraj

Vice Principal



## **Forward**

*Message from Convenor's Desk*

Greetings!!!

One Day National Seminar on "Shaping Narratives: Tamil Cinema and its Rendition of Women's Empowerment - An Avenue for Social Change" was organized by the Department of Visual Communication and Electronic Media on 7th February 2024. The core idea of the seminar was to provide a platform for the participants to discuss about Tamil films, female roles, character significance, and their issues. Discussion on how the female characterization is built from the writer's and director's perspective that affects the story, Screenplay, audience and society was highlighted during the seminar. Four Keynote speakers: Ms. Priya V. (a) Kamakshi - Film Director, Screen Writer, Chennai; Dr.V.Ilamparithi - Assistant Professor, Centre for Film and Electronic Media Studies, Madurai; Dr. Elango Natesan - Associate Professor and Former Head, PG Department of English, The American College, Madurai; and Dr. Uma Vangal Shiva Kumar - Dean of Research, Academics and Networking, International Institute of Film and Culture, Chennai made a diligent representation of the portrayal of women empowerment in Tamil cinema and its potential impact on societal perceptions through each session and gave new insight about the gender perspective.

The seminar, which served as the foundation for this note, explored the intricate ways in which Tamil cinema has evolved as a powerful medium for shaping narratives around women's empowerment. Through a comprehensive analysis of selected films and their portrayal of empowered female characters, the seminar highlighted the nuanced role that cinema plays in influencing social attitudes and contributing to progressive change. We appreciate the participants who came out with research papers for the seminar and as an acknowledgement for their contribution, the organizing secretary of the seminar Dr.P.Panbuselvan – Assistant Professor, Department of Visual Communication and Electronic Media, PSGCAS has taken utmost care in the compilation of the articles and research papers into a publication with ISBN.

Thank you all for your participation, representation, and support for the seminar.

HAPPY LEARNING AND HAPPY READING!!

Dr.G.Radha

Associate Professor & Head

## **Acknowledgment**

Anbu Vanakkam to Everyone!!!

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to Nature and God Almighty for their unwavering support throughout the planning and execution of this seminar.

My sincere appreciation goes to ICSSR, New Delhi, and the management of PSG College of Arts & Science, particularly to the Department of Visual Communication, for their invaluable assistance in bringing this seminar to fruition.

I am deeply thankful to Dr. T. Kannian, Secretary of PSG College of Arts & Science, whose encouragement, inspiration, and moral support were pivotal in ensuring the success of the national seminar "Shaping Narratives: Tamil Cinema and its Rendition of Women's Empowerment - An Avenue for Social Change".

Special appreciation is owed to Dr. D. Brindha, the Principal of PSG College of Arts & Science, who served as my mentor and advisor throughout the entire process of planning and executing the seminar. Her guidance and steadfast support were indispensable. Similarly, I am grateful to Dr. A. Anguraj, the Vice Principal of PSG College of Arts & Science, for providing invaluable insights and guidance throughout the conference.

I extend my eternal gratitude to my mentors: Ms. Priya V (a.k.a. Kamakshi), esteemed film director and screenwriter; Dr. V. Ilamparithi, my guide and well-wisher, also an Assistant Professor at the Centre for Film and Electronic Media, renowned for his prowess as a writer, speaker, and academician; Dr. Elango Natesan, Associate Professor and Former Head of the Department of English at the American College, Chinthamani Madurai, Tamil Nadu, known for his scholarly contributions; and Dr. Uma Vangal, Dean of Research, Academics & Networking at the International Institute of Film & Culture, Velachery, Chennai. Their generous allocation of time, humility, and unwavering commitment to continuous teaching have profoundly impacted both the forum and aspiring media professionals.

Dr. G. Radha, Head, Department of Visual Communication and Electronic Media deserves special acknowledgment for her prompt assistance and guidance during the seminar. I also wish to thank my colleagues, Mr. D. Soundra Rajan, Mr. Pradeep P (Anna) and Mr. S.R. Ravikumar, for their consistent encouragement.

I am deeply grateful to the individuals who worked tirelessly behind the scenes, contributing in every possible manner to ensure the seminar's success. While they prefer to remain anonymous, their dedication is invaluable.

I extend special thanks to Dr. Naachimuthu KP, Assistant Professor of Psychology, Dr. Venketachalam, Assistant Professor of Commerce, Dr. B. Bharathi, Dr. B. Pavithra and Dr. Nancy Thambi, Associate Professors of English for their significant contributions and support.

With deep appreciation, I thank my dear friends and guiding sources, Dr. L. Ramaraj, Assistant Professor, Department of Tamil and Mr. V. Sathish, Associate Professor, Department of Catering Science and Hotel Management. All your reinforcement and mentorship have been invaluable in my journey.

My special thanks go to Mr. Mohan, the Administrative Officer, for his invaluable guidance and expertise throughout the planning process. A sincere appreciation goes out to the Principal's Personal Assistants for their meticulous coordination behind the scenes. I am deeply grateful to Ms. Selvi, Receptionist, Mr. Sathish, Principal Office, Mr. Selva Ganesh, Vice Principal Office and Mr. Jayabalan, Secretary Office for their indispensable assistance in the conduct of the seminar. I am truly grateful for the support rendered by Aided and Self-Financing Office staff.

I wish to extend my sincere gratitude to the III VC A Students (2021 Batch) for their enthusiastic participation and invaluable support as volunteers during the seminar. Your dedication and commitment have been truly commendable. Special thanks to Abinaya. K, Chlipton Siso, S. Janish Prabu, Karthick Raja, P. Muthu Lakshmi, R. Navaneetha Krishnan, P. Navaneetha Krishnan, Nikita Ann John Muthakottu, K. Rishikasaom, Sakthi Murugan A, Sakthivel K, Santhosh. S, S. Sudharsan, Suryadas KJ, V. Tamilarasan, as well as alumni students Thilak, Sundar, Sneha, Keerthana, Gideon, and many others whose contributions were instrumental in making the seminar a success. Thank you all for your invaluable support and dedication.

I am honored to acknowledge the contributions of my family members who played both direct and indirect roles in the success of the event. I express my profound love and respect to my father, the remarkable academician, and extraordinary human being, Late. Mr. Panneer Selvam Muthusamy, whose influence as a poet, teacher, and social reformist has shaped countless lives. I extend my heartfelt appreciation to Dr. N. Anna Poorani, my spouse, as well as to my son, Adhi Dhuruvan, and my daughter, Yazhesai. Their support, encouragement, and understanding have been invaluable throughout this endeavor.

Thank You!!!

Anbudan,

Dr. P. Panbuselvan

### **Report of the Seminar**

It's my great pleasure to present the report on the ICSSR-Sponsored One-Day National Seminar titled - “Shaping Narratives: Tamil Cinema and its Rendition of Women’s Empowerment – An Avenue for Social Change”.

With registrations of over 366 & 282 participants nationwide, the seminar garnered widespread interest, commencing its journey from the northern territory of India - Jammu, and Kashmir, and extending down to the southern states of Telangana and Karnataka, with participants hailing from over 10 states. Notably, Tamil Nadu boasts a significant turnout with 200 registrations and 110 student participants from the department. Furthermore, the seminar features 65 paper presentations from seven universities, including the prestigious Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Institute, Indian Institute of Mass Communication, Kottayam, and Bharathiar University in addition to contributions from 35 colleges and media professionals from various states. This diverse and extensive participation underscores the seminar's broad appeal and promises a rich exchange of ideas and insights from across the country.

By setting a positive tone, the day’s seminar started with a prayer song by Nikitha Anna, final UG Student, followed by the lighting of the lamp by the dignitaries of the day. To acknowledge and set a warm tone for the event, Dr. G. Radha, Associate Professor and Head, Department of Visual Communication and Electronic Media graciously welcomed the magnificent gathering. The seminar's scope highlighting the transformative potential of Tamil cinema in promoting women's empowerment was presented by Dr. P. Panbuselvan, Assistant Professor, Department of Visual Communication and Electronic Media.

Vice Principal Dr. A. Anguraj sir's greetings heightened the significance of the occasion. Sir's presence and comments elevated the seminar's academic profile while offering the participants insightful information and encouragement.

The seminar comprised four insightful sessions, each led by distinguished speakers in the realm of Tamil cinema. Ms. Priya. V, a notable Film Director, Script Writer, and Documentary Filmmaker, explored the empowering contributions of female filmmakers, emphasizing their unique narratives and impact on women's empowerment within Tamil films. Dr. V. Ilamparithi, an esteemed academician, explored how Tamil cinema portrays stereotyped characters, unconventional female characters, and their strength, independence, and resilience, inspiring audiences with diverse narratives of empowerment and self-discovery.

Dr. Elango Natesan, Associate Professor and Former Head discussed how from early portrayals to nuanced, empowered characters, the evolution of women's representation in Tamil cinema reflects societal shifts, offering a journey from passive stereotypes to multifaceted roles that challenge norms and inspire progress. Finally, Dr. D. Uma Vangal, a Dean of Research, stressed how women in Tamil Cinema face ongoing challenges and critique regarding their roles, and how emerging trends suggest a shift towards more diverse and empowering representations, indicating areas for improvement in addressing gender disparities.

The participant's presence and discussion made the session more alive. The seminar promised a comprehensive exploration of the multifaceted roles of women in Tamil cinema, from historical perspectives to contemporary challenges and future potentials. A diverse range of people with varied levels of experience and viewpoints were drawn to today's inclusive seminar, which encouraged a lively discussion of ideas and observations. This varied mix of participants underscored the event's broad relevance, ensuring a comprehensive exploration of the nuanced roles and contributions of women in Tamil cinema.

Anbudan,

Dr.P.Panbuselvan

(Book Editor & Organizing Secretary of the ICSSR National Seminar, Feb 2024)

## **Prologue**

### *Message from the Editor's Desk*

Greetings to the Esteemed Readers,

It is with a sense of profound joy and scholarly enthusiasm that we extend our warmest welcome as the editor of this significant publication emanating from the ICSSR sponsored national seminar, "Shaping Narratives: Tamil Cinema and its Rendition of Women's Empowerment - An Avenue for Social Change".

Cinema, often described as the seventh art, stands as a harmonious amalgamation of various fine arts. Tamil Cinema, with a rich history spanning a century, holds a special place in the realm of artistic expression. The past hundred years have witnessed an evolution that not only captivates audiences emotionally but also plays a pivotal role in shaping societal, cultural, and moral narratives.

This unique art form has attracted attention from various quarters, leading to the organization of numerous seminars and conferences by national, international, government, and private organizations. These platforms serve as crucibles for intellectual discussions, probing the multifaceted impact of Tamil Cinema on human psychology, culture, and society.

Cinema, as a mirror to society, has the power to bring about significant transformations in the collective mindset of people. It catalyzes positive change, and this seminar focuses precisely on the transformative potential of Tamil Cinema in reshaping societal attitudes, particularly concerning women's representation.

While cinema transcends gender differences, the representation of women within the industry remains minimal. This dearth of female voices in cinema, both in front of and behind the camera, is a stark reality acknowledged not just by observers but, importantly, by women within the industry. The objective of this seminar is to highlight and address these gaps and lacunae in the portrayal of women in Tamil Cinema.

I am pleased to share that the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) recognized the societal impact this seminar could generate and wholeheartedly approved the proposal. This recognition underscores the significance of the endeavor to initiate a paradigm shift in societal perceptions through the lens of Tamil Cinema.

This seminar, hosted by PSG College of Arts & Science, serves as a groundbreaking platform for students, academicians, and cinema enthusiasts to delve into the nuanced exploration of women's empowerment in cinema.

By extending its focus to UG, PG, and research scholars in Visual Communication & Electronic Media, Mass Communication & Journalism, as well as filmmakers, academicians, and policy-makers, the seminar aims to cultivate a comprehensive understanding of the subject.

The collection of articles presented in this journal is a testament to the dedication and scholarship of our participants. Through their insightful research and nuanced perspectives, we hope to create awareness in society regarding the portrayal and empowerment of women in Tamil Cinema.

As we peruse the pages of this publication, let us embark on a journey of exploration and introspection. May the narratives shared within these articles serve as catalysts for meaningful change, inspiring future research, and contributing to a more inclusive and empowered cinematic landscape.

With academic fervor

Dr.G.Radha / Dr.P.Panbuselvan

Editors

### **Disclaimer**

It is hereby declared that the papers submitted by the participants for the ICSSR Sponsored One Day National Seminar on **"Shaping Narratives: Tamil Cinema and its Rendition of Women's Empowerment - An Avenue for Social Change"** organized by the Department of Visual Communication & Electronic Media at PSG College of Arts & Science, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, have been published as they were submitted. The responsibility to defend these submissions rests solely with the contributors. This publication aims to provide participants with a platform for expressing themselves and to inspire them to continue sharing their perspectives through writing in the future.





## CONTENTS

S.NO	ARTICLE TITLE & AUTHORS' NAME	PAGE NO
I	<b>Keynote Speaker – Session I - Female Film Makers and their Contribution to Empowerment in Tamil Film Narratives</b> Ms. Priya V (a) Kamakshi Film Director/Script Writer/ Filmmaker, Chennai.	1
II	<b>Keynote Speaker – Session II - Breaking Stereotype: Unconventional Female Characters in Tamil Cinema</b> Dr.V.Ilamparithi Assistant Professor & Coordinator Centre for Film and Electronic Media Studies Madurai Kamaraj University, Madurai.	9
III	<b>Keynote Speaker – Session III - From Myth to Mirror: The Multiple Faces of Woman in Tamil Cinema</b> Dr.N.Elango Associate Professor & Former Head (Retd.) Postgraduate Department of English, The American College, Madurai.	21
IV	<b>Keynote Speaker – Session IV - Women in Tamil Cinema: Challenges, Criticisms and Future Potential Trends</b> Dr. Uma Vangal Dean of Research, Academics & Networking International Institute of Film & Culture, Chennai.	25
1.	<b>An Analysis of Sudha's Characterization Played by Actress Archana in the Film ‘Veedu’</b> Sneha Elangovan, Media Professional, Bangalore.	34
2.	<b>Role of Liberal Arts Education in Facing the Future Challenges of Women in Tamil Film Industry</b> Pranavakumar R, Assistant Professor (Senior), Department of Liberal Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences Manipal Academy of Higher Education, Bengaluru.	38
3.	<b>From White Pages to the Silver Screen: The Novel <i>Red Tea</i>’s Depictions on Tamil Movie <i>Paradesi</i></b> Dr. S. Jayanthi, Associate Professor of English PSG College of Arts & Science, Coimbatore.	45
4.	<b>The Impact of Global Producers on Tamil Cinema Distribution: A Comprehensive Analysis</b> Dr.D.Rajavel, Assistant Professor, Department of Visual Communication Hindustan College of Arts and Science, Chennai.	51

5.	<b>From Hashtags to Heroines: Exploring the Intersection of Social Media and Women's Empowerment in Tamil Cinema</b> Dr R Srinivasan, Assistant Professor of Visual Communication S.A. College of Arts & Science, Chennai.	58
6.	<b>Koozhangal Stories: Unravelling Global Perspectives on Tamil Cinema's Cultural Impact and Cinematic Evolution</b> Ms. Sethu Lakshmi G, Assistant Professor S.A College of Arts and Science, Chennai.	71
7.	<b>Beyond Likes and Shares: A Comprehensive Analysis of Social Media's Contribution to Women's Empowerment in Tamil Cinema</b> Shuvam Mondal, Assistant Professor S.A. College of Arts & Science, Chennai.	79
8.	<b>Annapoorani: Transforming Culinary Norms, Breaking Stereotypes, and Redefining Female Space</b> Dr. Meera U. Menon, Assistant Professor Ravisankar S, Academic-cum Teaching Associate Indian Institute of Mass Communication, Southern Regional Campus, Kerala.	93
9.	<b>Unveiling Gender Narratives: A Critical Analysis of the Portrayal of Women in South Indian Cinema</b> Dr. Deepika Krishnan P K & Mr. Manosh Aravind IAC Assistant Professors, Department of Sociology PSG College of Arts & Science, Coimbatore.	100
10.	<b>The Evolution of Female Characters in Tamil Cinema and its Impact</b> Mr. AkashPramoth Assistant Professor, Department of Social Work PSG College of Arts & Science, Coimbatore. Dr. S. Kalaiselvan Assistant Professor, Department of Social Work Sri Ramakrishna Mission Vidyalaya College of Arts and Science, Coimbatore.	109
11.	<b>Representation of Woman in the Movie 'Soorarai Pottru' Shifted the Stereotype - Narrative Analysis</b> Dr. A. Shanthi Head and Assistant Professor, Department of Visual Communication Sona College of Arts and Science, Salem. M. Kirubakaran Head and Assistant Professor, Department of Visual Communication AVS College of Arts and Science (Autonomous), Salem. E. Vishnu Sharma Assistant Professor, Department of Visual Communication Sona College of Arts and Science, Salem.	114
12.	<b>Representation of Working Women in Tamil Films</b> Ms. Deepthi. S, Research Scholar, Dr. T. Jaisakthivel, Assistant Professor, Department of Journalism and Communication, Madras University, Chennai.	121

13.	<b>Filmographic Metamorphosis: A Critique of Emerging Female Leadership Portrayals in Select Tamil Movies</b> Ms. T. Narmatha, Ms. G. Parkavi, Research Scholars Dr. K. Deepa Assistant Professor Dr. D. Sujatha, Head and Associate Professor, Department of English (Aided) Sri GVG Visalakshi College for Women, Udumalpet.	131
14.	<b>Exploration of the Psychological Effects in the Viewers and the Powerful Female Protagonist in 'Raatchasi'</b> Ms. Jayanth Anto Vijay. J, Research Scholar Dr. Nancy Thambi, Associate Professor Department of English, PSG College of Arts & Science, Coimbatore.	135
15.	<b>Intersectional Feminism in the South Indian Biopic <i>Abhinetri</i> – A Critical Perspective</b> Mr. Vijay Srinivasan, Research Scholar Dr. S. Sasikala, Head of the Department, School of Communication Dr. G R Damodaran College of Science, Coimbatore.	142
16.	<b>Unravelling the Traditional Norms in <i>36Vayathinile</i> and <i>Magalir Mattum</i></b> Deepikha. B., Research Scholar Dr. V.M Saranya, Assistant Professor Department of English, PSG College of Arts & Science, Coimbatore.	148
17.	<b>Beyond the Reel: A Psychological Inquiry into Impactful Women Characters in Tamil Cinema and their Transformative Influence on Real-World Dynamics</b> G. Dhivyadharshini, Student Dr. P. Thamilselvan, Assistant Professor Department of Psychology, PSG College of Arts & Science, Coimbatore.	152
18.	<b>Interpreting Tamil Cinema and its Narratives: A Compendious Study of 'Women in a Man's World'</b> Madhumitha. K, Research Scholar Dr. S. Vanitha, Assistant Professor Department of English, PSG College of Arts & Science, Coimbatore.	162
19.	<b>Wokeism in Tamil Cinema: A Critical Analysis of Contemporary Narratives and their Psychosocial Impact</b> Rakeni. P, Student Dr.K. P. Naachimuthu, Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology PSG College of Arts & Science, Coimbatore.	168
20.	<b>A Glimpse of Atheist Feminism: Women in <i>Ayali</i></b> Sandya V, Ph.D. Research Scholar Dr. B. Pavithra, Associate Professor Department of English, PSG College of Arts & Science, Coimbatore.	175
21.	<b>A Study on Portrayal of Women in the Period Film '<i>Madarasapattinam</i>' (2010)</b> Clara Rajan, Research Scholar Krishnapriya N.C, Assistant Professor SASTRA Deemed to be University, Chennai.	181

22.	<b>Representation of Women and Marginalized Communities in Mari Selvaraj's <i>Maamannan</i> (2023)</b> Meeraz Hoque, Research Scholar, Department of English Cooch Behar Panchanan Barma University, West Bengal.	187
23.	<b>Cinematic Justice for the Young: Legal Beneficence in Tamil Films and Indian Constitutional Parallels</b> Keerthana. R, Research Scholar, Department of English PSG College of Arts & Science, Coimbatore.	193
24.	<b>Through the Auteur's Eyes: Decoding the Feminine Mystique in Mani Ratnam's Classic <i>Mouna Ragam</i></b> Vasumathi. M, Research Scholar, Department of English PSG College of Arts & Science, Coimbatore.	200
25.	<b>K. Balachander's Trailblazing Portrayal of Women in Tamil Cinema</b> Ms.Gadepalli Satya Saras Chandrika, M.A English Dr.N G.P Arts and Science College, Coimbatore.	206
26.	<b>Transformative Decades: Realistic Portrayals of Women in Tamil Cinema (1980s-1990s)</b> Mr. K.Partha Sarathi, M.A English Dr.N.G.P. Arts and Science College, Coimbatore.	212
27.	<b>The Journey of Gold Women: Female Heroes of Tamil Cinema</b> Ms. B. Gowsika, M.A. English Dr. N.G.P Arts and Science College, Coimbatore.	217
28.	<b>Empowered Portrayals of Women in Tamil Cinema: A Cinematic Metamorphosis</b> Ms. R.Nithya, M.A English Dr. N.G. P Arts and Science College, Coimbatore.	222
29.	<b>From Screen to Stage: J.Jayalalitha's Cinematic Journey of Empowerment</b> Ms. Trifena Magthalin. M. S, M.A English Dr.N. G, P Arts and Science College, Coimbatore.	227
30.	<b>Evolution of Dynamic and Diverse Female Leads in the Movie "<i>Ponniyin Selvan</i>"</b> Mr. Thinagaran B & Ms. Vinu Samyuktha R, MA English PSG College of Arts & Science, Coimbatore	233
31.	<b>Breaking Barriers: A Critical Analysis of <i>Raatchasi's</i> Impact on Educational Reforms</b> Ms. P. V. Aiswarya, M.A. English Dr. N.G.P Arts and Science College, Coimbatore.	239
32.	<b>Feasting on Feelings: The Cinematic Symphony of Food and Emotion</b> Mr. Philips E. Rubin & Ms. Geetak Josi, M.A English Dr. N.G.P College of Arts and Science, Coimbatore.	242
33.	<b>Analysis of the Role of the Female Lead in the Film <i>Gatta Kusthi</i></b> Ms. Karthika M.K & Ms.Sugapriya A. BA English PSG College of Arts & Science, Coimbatore	247

## **SESSION - I**

### **Female Film Makers and their Contribution to Empowerment in Tamil Film Narratives**

Ms. Priya V (a) Kamakshi  
Film Director/Script Writer/ Film Maker, Chennai.

Good morning to you all... It gives me great pleasure to be here... At first, when Panbu asked me if I would be willing to address this gathering here, I was a little hesitant... It may not seem that way, but I am someone who truly likes to be behind the scenes... Give me a microphone on a shooting floor, and I will talk non-stop, but put me on a stage, with a podium and a mike, and I become speechless.

But then I thought about it... If not now, then when...? I tell certain stories through the films I write and direct, so why not actually let people hear my voice, my thoughts, I was after all one of the first Women Assistant Directors (not the first – but one of the first) in the Tamil Film Industry, with no cinema family background.

The first question anyone asks me when they find out I am a writer/ director is, “As a woman, what hardships do you face in the film industry” The second question is “As a woman filmmaker what do you think of the way women are portrayed in films”.

These questions at first used to pain me... I would always wonder why I am looked upon as “different”, why am I a “woman” filmmaker and why do people think a “woman” filmmaker faces more hardship than a “man” making films... Personally, I have never been treated differently (or have I) my father always told me I could do anything I wanted... My family has always supported my Cinema Dream... So why am I asked these very same questions over and over...?

As you grow older (and a little wiser) I realise I am one of the exceptions and not the rule... I am one of the very few women who have tried to make it (and still trying) and have stuck around to see how far I can go... which now pushes us to go back in time... before society was formed...

What has the man/ woman equation been since evolution...? A man was a hunter-gatherer... The woman was the child-bearer... Breeding more humans for survival... Slowly as humans become more evolved, they settled down into domestic bliss... the concept of one man, one woman came about... then the humans became more evolved and women and men are almost equal, in the sense that the woman doesn't have to only make babies and take care of the home.

Now I understand where the question is coming from... We have been conditioned for centuries and centuries to believe that a woman's role is this...

so obviously how can a woman do this so-called man's job...?

She must be finding it difficult is the general assumption... People who ask me these questions don't even realise that to be creative one must use the right side of the brain (the so-called feminine side) and all humans have brains that are both masculine and feminine... there is a bit of man in every woman and a bit of woman in every man... In some one side is more active than the other... so while physically one may be a man or woman, mentally one could be both... Analytical, Logical, Thinking, Conscious... and at the same time, creative and emotional... Humans have been so bogged down by archaic labels like homemaker, earner, mother, father, brother, sister, husband, and wife... that they don't even realise it... So obviously it is a wonder to many that a woman could do something like make a film, handle a camera, and command a set...

Now I take ownership and say, the film industry is a tough place... And I as a Woman filmmaker do have hardships, but it is like any other industry... As society evolves so also will the industry...

Let us go back a bit in History and see the evolution of Women writers and Directors in general... As in life, the journey for women in cinema too has been one which has been full of prejudices and preconceived ideas...

It is very interesting to note that there were many more women filmmakers/screenwriters before movies became "business". Silent films in the beginning were short – maybe between 5 to 15 minutes in length...

Alice Guy-Blache made her debut short clip in 1896. She is credited in History as the first female director and the only one from 1896 to 1906.

This was a period where gender roles were actually not prescribed and women were in front of the camera as well as behind. This went on till the 1920s. But as filmmaking techniques evolved women filmmakers slowly started taking the back seat... Films got longer and were such a popular source of entertainment, that it was felt that women couldn't manage this. As movies became a business, unions were formed and many unions refused to take on women as members and slowly but surely women behind the cameras disappeared. There were some editors who fought on and stuck on, but now women were pushed to being set decorators, costume assistants, etc... From then on till today the struggle is still on.

In India, too, very few women actually came to the forefront as filmmakers. FatmaBegum is considered the first woman filmmaker in India. In the South TP Rajalakshmi is the forerunner. Films evolved and here too women took on more "womanly" roles in the film Industry.

You will be really surprised that the Make-up Union in the South Indian film industry didn't allow women to become a part of the union and do make-up till the 1990s.

But as always many men and women have persisted and slowly things are changing. While most of the women who have become writers and directors have come from families who have been in the industry or have been actors, there are many who have come in with just dreams of telling stories. In the South, we have examples of women from cinema like Dr. Bhanumathi, Vijayanirmala, Sripriya, Suhasini, and Revathy and today we have women without a big film background backing Nandhini Reddy, JS Nandhini, Halitha Shameem, Madhumita, Sudha Kongara and yours truly to name a few. Yes!! the ratio is still not equal, and may never be so. But the journey has begun and it will hopefully get better.

The voice of the woman has indeed become stronger in terms of characters and their arcs. While in the 70s, 80s, and 90s there were a few filmmakers who tried their level best to portray women and their issues... it has always been with a male gaze. It has been the perception of the man. Such writing still exists and will always be sexist and can only grow or become better with a better understanding of the female gender. But it has improved a great deal. When this topic comes up for argument, I have always heard male writers and directors say they are being true to their story and they write what the story demands. They may be right. Even I as a film writer and director will always be true to the story I am writing and making. But I will always try to hear both perspectives; the female and the male. That is the sensibility of the new breed of filmmakers now.

I would like to share with you all a bit about my humble beginnings in the film industry. In 1990 I joined college and wanted to become an Actor. I chose to study at Madras Christian College, Tambaram because theatre there was very active and many men and women from my family had studied there and had advised me that if I had ever wanted to pursue a career in theatre then that was the place to begin. My father insisted to me that even if I wanted a career as an actor I should have a degree. It was a backup in case my journey failed.

It was at that time I met Suhasini Mani Ratnam through common friends. She was doing a Tamil Serial titled Penn. Each Episode dealt with a woman in some part of her life. She had wanted my father to act in a role and had come to meet him. And there I was excited to meet a glorious actor, a national award winner and the woman who stood equal to the biggest filmmaker (according to me) Mr. Mani Ratnam. *Mouna Ragam* struck a chord within me and somewhere I felt he got women so much better than most writers. So yes, I was excited to meet Suhasini. She spoke to my father and he agreed to do the role and I sat avidly listening to her narration of the stories she had planned. I was stumped.



Here was this woman, yes, she was a brilliant actor... but here was this woman who was telling stories that resonated so much for me. She was actually thinking about today's women (then), their problems, from their perspective. While there were many stalwarts like KB sir, Barathiraja sir, and Mani sir who had all portrayed new women, here was a woman...

who was speaking about women, the way I felt they should be spoken about. It was different, it was refreshing, and I was able to identify with them so easily. She turned to me and asked me if I wanted to do a role in one of the stories. And I jumped at it. It was a mind-blowing experience.

### **A Clip from *Penn* Serial by Suhasini Maniratnam**

(ABOUT *PENN*) – I honestly feel that this was the starting point for so many better characters to be written in Tamil Films. This was a serial which was written and shot in 1990. It was talking about the modern independent woman of that day. It talked about the feelings women had and explored what they thought about relationships and life in general. *PENN* had other stories which dealt with so many other issues. It had Revathy, Radhika, Geetha, Saranya, Amala and Suhasini herself portraying these women. Revathy's story was about the relationship between a mother and daughter. Radhika's story was about a woman who is recently widowed and how she copes with life and children alone. Geetha's story portrays a woman who has been wronged by her husband. Saranya's story was about domestic abuse. Amala's story was about a doctor and her bond with a patient. Suhasini's story was about a woman from a village and how she coped with her man. The beauty of this serial was that it also portrayed the men as real, normal people.

To me that was the inspiration. If I look back and introspect, that was where it all started for me. It also made me realize that I didn't ever want to be in front of the camera. I wanted to be behind it. I wanted to tell stories... I felt there were many more stories to tell. I had no background in cinema, not too much exposure to films, and no Godfather to mould and guide me. All I had was this thought that I wanted to tell stories. So, in my mind, I took on Suhasini as my mentor. Even she didn't know it till much later. By the time I finished my degree I knew I had to learn about films; theatre I felt would not get me too far. I met Suhasini and she advised me to apply to the Film Institute. I did and I am eternally grateful to the Late Director Sridhar Sir who was part of the panel and he fought that I should be given admission. My journey began. I then worked with Suhasini on her film *Indira* and from there I joined Mani sir and worked on *Iruvar* and *Dil Se*. After that, I was on my own. The fire to tell stories was burning even more brightly. The fire tells stories from a woman's point of view.

### **Clip From *Mitr* –My Friend**

Between 1997 and 2000 I had started writing Kanda Naal Mudhal. But in between all that I had also done 2 mega serials, written the story and screenplay for Mitr –my friend. I felt during that time, though women and their issues were being portrayed by many filmmakers, it was still not enough. I wanted to delve deeper. Revathy directed the film and it was one of the first films to be done in English.

Sudha Kongara co-wrote the screenplay and was also an Assistant Director on that film. The film talked about a woman in her 30s trying to find herself.

My inspiration to write that story came from real life. I had seen my sisters, my mother, and my aunts all go through the drudgery of domesticity at some point in their lives. Most women live for others...many years to live for themselves.

Women who live for others are considered goddesses and martyrs. Women who wanted to live for themselves were considered loose, feminists and arrogant. (in many cases this still holds true) I knew these women; they had all done so much for their families; they had sacrificed so much of their desires, wants and needs because of the role they had to play. Because Society told them they had to be that way. They were not bad women; they were not morally loose; they were not arrogant... They were just normal everyday women... Lakshmi the character in Mitr – My Friend stemmed from there. She was not perfect, yet she was real. She had her own desires but had tried to strike a balance and had gotten lost in the way.

I had to conceive the character carefully and take the middle ground... She should neither be a “Kannagi” nor a “Madhavi”. The audience to understand her needs and wants and not judge her. Life is after all shades of grey and Lakshmi had to be that. There were a lot of typical female characters being written. A lot of female characters written were black and white... but I wanted a grey woman...Mitr-my friend was born. The story has so many layers and a lot of subtext in it...But the challenge was to make it appealing to all... Revathy used an all-women crew for it. And I think through the making of the film, we ourselves as women and film writers and filmmakers were on the path of self-discovery... Our confidence grew... our voices were finally being heard. The film won awards, for our Editor Bina, for Revathy and Shobana and I knew I was on the right side of things.

Having done Mitr – My Friend and two women-centric mega serials, I decided to dabble in writing better male characters too. Kanda Naal Mudhal was etched out. I wanted to write a love story that just didn’t show the male’s point of view. I wanted to get away from the stalking syndrome and the female bashing writers were doing. I wanted to have equal characters that behaved and spoke how modern common people did. I didn’t want a superhero or a plastic heroine. I didn’t want a larger-than-life story. I wanted to get into the skin of the generation of smart, thinking people.

### ***Clip from Kanda Naalmudhal***

The film to me and many people is much more than just a romantic comedy. It resonates with people as true, imperfect characters who are neither good nor bad. I tried to deal with friendship, love, sacrifice, and family all in the way I had seen, heard, and experienced. The scene we have seen now encompasses everything I think the film stood for. It has a woman talking about her love the way she felt it. I tried very hard not to use too many “cinematic” dialogues and wanted it to be as real as life.

And when the film was released and was received well, I knew I had spoken for my gender in some way. I can proudly say that many more women from normal households are coming into this film industry and this film is probably one of the reasons why.

Madhumita, Halitha, Nandhini, Sudha, and many more are still standing in the industry. Still making a mark. They have proved that the woman’s voice is strong and speaks with as much clarity as a man’s. By not only catering to women, they have found themselves a universal audience.

### ***Clips from KD***

Here is a delightful film from Madhumita. A film that was not essentially about women at all. But it was about a man and a child written and directed from a woman’s point of view. The film is funny, heartwarming and very deep. A very serious issue of planning the aged people’s death which is still prevalent in villages is shown in an appealing, palatable manner. An old man decides to take matters into his own hands and runs away. It is such a modern and today’s way of looking at things. Without getting caught up in the drudgery of the idea, Madhumita has tried to look at it differently. Madhumita’s voice is heard throughout this film; she is one of the main contributors to have changed the narrative.

### ***Halitha’s Film***

Just look at this scene from Sillu Karuppatti... Who had ever talked with so much clarity about a husband-wife relationship...? It is almost like we are right in their house like a fly on the wall. It is deep and intimate and so effective. She is a very important voice who has shouted out to the world that women writers and filmmakers have arrived.

### ***Nandhini’s Film***

Who said we couldn’t? Who said women couldn’t write comedy? Who said women couldn’t make fun-filled characters? Who said women will only talk about women’s issues... Nandhini a film institute diploma holder who also assisted me on Kanda Naal Mudhal is also presently doing a web series for Amazon Prime.

Nandhini is an important voice who has strived and is still striving to make a difference.

### ***Clip from Irudhisutru***

Sudha has taken it one step further and made us women even prouder. To stay strong in any industry is tough, and to stay strong in the film industry is even tougher. Sudha has tried very hard to do that. Her writing and direction have made it possible for women to come to the forefront and make roads where it was not possible. Irudhi Sutru is a coming-of-age film about a woman... It deals with a totally imperfect character and how gloriously she has portrayed it.

I remember how much Sudha struggled while making this film. I remember how much she had to fight to stand for what she believed in. Her first film didn't do well and it was double the struggle for her. But she plodded on. A lot of interference from people who thought they knew her story better than her... a lot of nay-sayers who said this film wouldn't work at all. But... I remember after the premier.... People clapped for a whole minute.....My heart so is with hers. I knew Sudha had arrived and how she had arrived.... with a bang...People were thronging around her...Then ay-sayers were asking for her dates..... I remember pushing through the crowd and hugging her. All I told her was "It is working for me... big time" The look on her face I can never forget From *Mitr– My Friend* from being ADs together with Mani sir...from all the struggles women had faced... We had come far....We both had tears in our eyes... I was so happy.....While I myself was struggling after making two films, here she was who had raised her voice and spoken with such clarity. "I have arrived" "I am a woman and I have arrived" "I am not just a woman who makes films" and "I am a filmmaker" *Sooraraipotru* Sudha has been able to succeed in making thought-provoking and yet commercially appealing cinema. She has tried to make her films not about women, but about men. She has bridged that invisible gap that has always been there. *Sooraraipotru* is an example of that. She has given so many women the courage to dream... She stands tall with pride and confidence and many women will follow in her footsteps.

### ***Anantham–Teaser/Trailer***

Women in the Tamil Industry are pushing boundaries... The invisible gap is surely being bridged. Anantham written and directed by me is one more example. A web series with 8 episodes broadly based on the 9 emotions, the storyteller is a house called Anantham. The house is a silent spectator to the people who have lived in that house. I have tried to deal with many characters; and have tried to talk about many issues... I have tried to deal with the many facets of life. The story spans from the 1960s till 2015.

A house is a witness to many intimate things that happen in a person's life... Ahouse sees so many things that others don't. By giving a voice to a house, I have tried to be the voice of several characters... men, women, children and others.

I have talked about acceptance, love, anger, inspiration, guilt, redemption, homo-sexuality, child abuse, and cruelty to differently able people... Streaming on Zee5 Tamil, Anantham is all about characters with all their imperfections and their trials and tribulations. Anantham is truly a woman's voice not meant to be only about women...It is about people... it is about life...it is about society.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate these points. Times are changing for the better. And women are being taken seriously in all fields. As one part of society is surely regressing, another is surely improving. For women to be the change, men must also change.

For more women to speak with clarity, men must also accept their voice. Social change can only come when all genders are treated equally. Women have come far, but there are miles to go. Women who dream must be encouraged. Women who want to be different must be given opportunities. Women who want to change the narrative must have a voice.

There are several Halithas, Priyas, Sudhas, Nandhinis and Madhumitas all waiting for their voices to be heard; who are waiting to express themselves. It is up to us to allow it to happen. I don't mean only men, I mean even women. If a ManiRatnam, or a Gautham Menon, or a Prakash Raj, or a Suriya or a 7<sup>th</sup> Channel Narayanan weren't there, Priya or Sudha or Madhumita or Nandhini may have never been heard. I name only a few people who have tried to project and encourage women; there are several more....several...more...And I thank them all from the bottom of my heart.

Gender bias exists everywhere, and I mean both ways; only when those boundaries (boundaries that have been laid down from the beginning of evolution) are broken can there be change. There has to come a time when my breed (female filmmakers) is not pegged down by my gender; but by my capability to tell a story as effectively as anyone else. While I am proud of my gender, I would also like to be known as a "filmmaker" just a "filmmaker". Sensitivity to that is what will be true empowerment. Only then will more voices be heard. Only then will cinema truly be represented equally.

"One can never consent to creep, when one feels an impulse to soar" A beautiful quote... Women shall soar for sure if their wings are not clipped if they are not caged, and if their impulses are not suppressed. I started my film journey 30 years ago... and I am still running. Running with my head held high, running with pride. There has been no big celebration of it... but I celebrate myself... I celebrate that I have in some way paved a small path for several like me. There are many more that have joined me on my journey... There are some who have overtaken me too... And I cheer them on for their bravery, I am proud of them... I see them running alongside men... Some even overtook them... It is a good healthy marathon...There is no gender here...there is no competition. .... There are only good, wholesome, all-compassing stories to tell...

## SESSION II

### **Breaking Stereotype: Unconventional Female Characters in Tamil Cinema**

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#### **Introduction**

Tamil cinema, like any other film industry, has undergone a transformative journey, challenging age-old stereotypes and redefining the portrayal of women on screen. In recent years, filmmakers have taken bold steps to introduce unconventional female characters that break away from traditional norms.

#### **Breaking the Mold**

These characters, marked by their complexity, independence, and unique narratives, contribute to a more diverse and inclusive representation of women in Tamil cinema.

One notable departure from conventional portrayals is the rise of female characters who defy societal expectations. Instead of conforming to the submissive wife or self-sacrificing mother archetype, these characters navigate their own paths, pursuing dreams and aspirations beyond traditional roles.

#### **The Modern Maverick**

Recent Tamil films have introduced audiences to modern, independent women who are unapologetically themselves. These characters challenge stereotypes by prioritizing their careers, ambitions, and personal growth. They stand as symbols of empowerment, inspiring audiences to question and redefine societal norms.

#### **Complex Narratives and Layers**

Unconventional female characters in Tamil cinema are characterized by their depth and multifaceted personalities. Filmmakers are exploring narratives that delve into the complexities of women's lives, addressing issues such as mental health, societal expectations, and personal relationships. These stories offer a more authentic and relatable portrayal of the female experience.

#### **Breaking Beauty Stereotypes**

Gone are the days when female characters in Tamil cinema were solely defined by their physical appearance. Filmmakers are now challenging beauty stereotypes, presenting characters with diverse body types, appearances, and personalities. This shift promotes a healthier and more inclusive representation of women, fostering a positive impact on societal perceptions.

## Subverting Traditional Tropes

Innovative storytelling techniques are being employed to subvert traditional tropes associated with female characters. Filmmakers are consciously avoiding the damsel in distress narrative, instead presenting women as resilient, resourceful individuals capable of driving the plot forward.

**The Submissive Wife/Mother:** This stereotype portrays women as docile, submissive figures whose primary role is to serve their husbands and families. They are often shown sacrificing their personal desires for the well-being of others.

**The Damsel in Distress:** This character type is often helpless and in need of rescue by a male protagonist. She may lack agency and is portrayed as dependent on a male character for her salvation.

**The Glamorous Love Interest:** Female characters in some Tamil films have been primarily used as glamorous additions to the storyline, serving as love interests or eye candy without much depth or character development.

**The Sacrificial Virgin:** This character type is often depicted as pure, innocent, and willing to sacrifice everything for the sake of family honor or societal expectations. This character is commonly seen in melodramatic family dramas.

**The Femme Fatale/Vamp:** Some Tamil films have portrayed women in negative or cunning roles, often using their sexuality as a weapon to manipulate male characters. These characters are typically portrayed as villains or antagonists.

**The Modern, Independent Woman:** In recent years, there has been a positive shift in character portrayals. Some films have featured strong, independent women who pursue their careers and ambitions, challenging traditional gender roles.

It's crucial to acknowledge that there has been a significant evolution in character portrayals in Tamil cinema, with filmmakers increasingly focusing on more nuanced and realistic depictions of women. Modern Tamil films often showcase female characters with depth, agency, and a range of personalities, breaking away from traditional stereotypes. Filmmakers and audiences alike are recognizing the importance of diverse and empowering representations of women on screen.



### **Stereotyping**

- A stereotype is an over-simplified and unjustified opinion about others.
- It is problematic because it ignores diversity among individuals.
- Filmmakers often rely heavily on stereotypes, because they're a quick and simple way to establish a movie character's traits.
- These stereotypes can be based on race, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and other factors

### **Women Stereotypes in Films**

- Women as support characters
- Someone who needs to be rescued
- Love interests
- Part of the domestic sphere like household, motherhood etc
- Over emotional and powerless characters
- Characters lacking ambition
- Characters without back story/depth/objective
- To motivate protagonists



## **Break Stereotypes**

The social cognitive theory states that

- Media content can have a passive and long-lasting effect on people and their perception of reality
- Instead of offering a realistic representation, the media tends to encourage gender stereotypes in terms of personality characteristics, abilities and attitudes.
- Films still confine female ability to the sphere of love, sexuality, and maternal instinct. In contrast, the masculine act of rescuing is tied to knowledge and physical power. (Nulman, 2014).
- Thus, film creates an imbalance between our perception of women in film and their actual roles and status in reality.

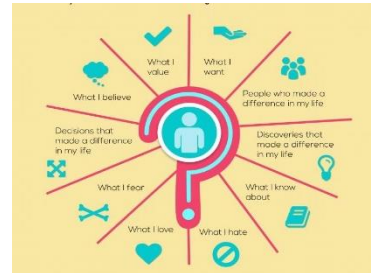
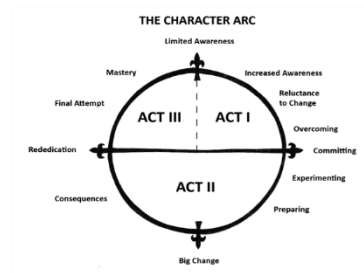
## **Some Statistics**

- Only one-third of the female characters are speaking characters
- One-fourth of the female characters wear revealing clothes
- Average ratio of male characters to female characters is 2.5:1

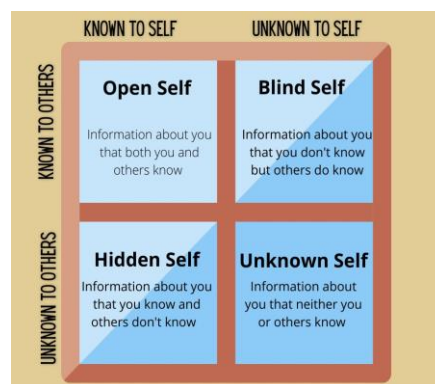
## **Define Unconventional**

- Cast against type
- Bold and powerful characters
- Versatile characters
- Grey characters
- Unrealistic/ unrelatable
- Unpredictable
- Complex
- Fit in a character arc
- Multi-Dimensional (Physiology, Psychology and Sociology attributes are defined)

## Character Arc



## JOHARI WINDOW – Mapping Personalities



## Identify the Characters

- Shakthi
- Hasini
- Abhi
- Neelambari
- Manimegalai
- Jessie
- Mathivathani
- Yamini
- Shobana
- Komalavalli
- Rudra
- Merlin
- Bommi

S.NO	Film	Year	Duration
1	<i>Parasakthi</i>	1952	Failed
2	<i>Saraswathi Sabatham</i>	1966	Failed
3	<i>Sindhu Bhairavi</i>	1985	Failed
4	<i>Anjali</i>	1990	Passed
5	<i>MagalirMattum</i>	1994	Passed
6	<i>Karuththamma</i>	1994	Passed
7	<i>Indra</i>	1995	Failed
8	<i>Kalki</i>	1996	Passed
9	<i>Azhagi</i>	2002	Failed
10	<i>M.Kumaran S/o Mahalakshmi</i>	2004	Failed
11	<i>Chandramuki</i>	2005	Failed
12	<i>Iraivi</i>	2016	Failed
13	<i>Amma Kannaku</i>	2016	Passed
14	<i>Magalirmattum</i>	2017	Failed
15	<i>Nadigaiyarthilagam</i>	2018	Passed

## BECHDEL TEST

### Films that Failed in Bechdel Test

#### *Parasakthi*

The role of the female protagonist is not convincing and it does not yield the desired effect. Also, it rendered no justice to the character, Kalyani.

#### *Saraswathi Sabatham*

The film is about three women. But, they have less prominence in the movie. Though they converse, they mostly talk about men. From that front, the film fails to acknowledge women.

#### *Sindhu Bhairavi*

Sindhu is a contemporary woman in her thoughts and words, but In the end, she succumbs to Patriarchy like a common woman.

***Indra***

The film tries to bring in societal change amidst the predominantly male chauvinistic society. At the same time, women's space is constrained.

Though they have an opportunity to express themselves, they discuss about men.

***Azhagi***

Two women from different walks of life fail to address their issues, rather they talk about the male lead, Shanmugam.

***M.Kumaran S/O Mahalakshmi***

Here the mother converses with her son's fiancé about her son.

***Chandramuki***

With a few strong female characters in the film, they are neither independent nor expressive.

***Iraivi***

All three women are from different societal backgrounds fighting different issues. Yet their voices are stifled.

***Magalir Mattum***

Though this film has strong women characters, their conversation always revolves around men.

**ARCHETYPES Characters**

- Victoria Lynn offers heroic and villainous sub-types of 8 female and 8 male archetypes, along with 4 Friend archetypes, 6 Rival archetypes, and 3 Symbol archetypes.
- The author connects each of the main archetypes to a figure from Greek or Egyptian myth and describes in depth the characteristics of that archetype: what they care about, what they fear, what motivates them, and how other characters see them.
- An archetype is a consistent and typical version of a particular character but it fits into a time-tested mold that embodies a pure form.

**1. Aphrodite: The Seductive Muse**

- An expressive woman, full of life, who sees the simple solutions other people don't and is inventive and resourceful.

- But seeks intimacy and is strongly identified with sexuality, to the point where "this archetype has gotten a bad rap". Manimegalai from *Engeyum Eppothum*.

## **2. Artemis: The Amazon**

- A powerful, independent woman who loves competition, but also identifies with nature and femininity  
Tara from *Oh Kadhal Kanmani*.

## **3. Athena: The Father's Daughter**

- A studious and intelligent woman who furthers her career by aligning herself with powerful men and trying to prove she's every bit as capable as the men around her, but loves to be in control. Abhi from *Abhiyum Naanum*.

## **4. Demeter: The Nurturer**

- A kind and compassionate woman who sacrifices much in order to help others, particularly children or those she feels she is responsible for; her whole identity is tied up in caring for others. Mathivathani from *Aram*.

## **5. Hera: The Matriarch**

- A strong, supportive, committed woman who sticks by her family no matter what, yet won't let others wrong her even if they're family; she's the shoulder everyone can lean on yet she wants to keep tabs on everyone too. Yamini from *Mayakkam Enna*.

## **6. Hestia: The Mystic**

- A calm, gentle woman of simple tastes, who enjoys solitude and does not shy from basic household chores (a career doesn't much interest her).
- She needs to be creative and free-spirited, and she wants to do things for herself rather than Shobana from *Thriuchitrambalam* than beholden to someone else.

## **7. Isis: The Female Messiah**

- A selfless woman who never sways from her life's mission, she doesn't take sides but acts as a detached observer, although she stands up for her own beliefs. Shakthi from *Alaipayuthe*.

## **8. Persephone: The Maiden**

- A carefree, childlike woman who prefers to let others handle the details of life so she doesn't have to worry about it; she easily opens up and approaches people that others might shun, although sometimes this can harm her. Hasini from *Santhosh Subramaniam*.

### 1. Aphrodite: The Femme Fatale

- A cold, apathetic woman who uses sex to get what she wants from men. Geetha from *Pachaikili Muthucharam*.

### 2. Artemis: The Gorgon

- A vengeful woman who can easily go into a rage when she feels threatened. Komalavalli from *Sarkar*.

### 3. Athena: The Backstabber

- This woman would do anything to get to the top, even if it meant ruining the lives or careers of others. Rudra from *Kodi*.

### 4. Demeter: The Overcontrolling Mother

- A woman who butts into her children's lives. Her need to be needed is taken to extremes; she might even kidnap her children if they tried to leave her. Kayavarnam from *Vetrivel*.

### 5. Hera: The Scorned Woman

- She doesn't take betrayal well and demands respect from all. If she finds her man has dumped her she will make life a nightmare for him and/or whoever he has Neelambari from *Padayappa* dumped her for.

### 6. Hestia: The Betrayer

- The Betrayer hides under an innocent shy mask. In reality, she is manipulative and only out for herself. Bhanu in *Paarthen Rasithen*.

### 7. Isis: The Destroyer

- A steadfast woman who never sways from her life's mission, but sees things in black and white; she is a firm believer in "the ends justify the means". Neelambari from *Padayappa*.

### TRULY UNCONVENTIONAL: Bommi in *Soorarai Potru*

- Bommi is a fictional character of Bhargavi Gopinath, a successful pastry chef, and businesswoman who is also the wife of Entrepreneur Gopinath
- Career for self – a must!
- Equality is the only way
- All is well with love, loads of love!
- Perseverance is the path!
- A feisty woman of extraordinary courage and resilience who pursued her own dreams against all odds while holding the family together. Inspiration to all women to follow their passions.

### **TRULY UNCONVENTIONAL: Muthazhagu in *Paruthiveeran***

- Not the usual romantic girly heroine
- Complex yet single-minded
- Neither modest nor shows off
- Strong-willed and fierce full
- Combining spitfire aggression and nuanced expression in a charismatic performance
- While showing great resolve, inner strength and toughness, she captures the vulnerable shades of her character as well beautifully.

### **TRULY UNCONVENTIONAL Aruvi from *Aruvi***

- A Truly Trend-setting and unconventional character breaking all of the traditional attributes associated with the heroine or female characters in Tamil cinema.
- Strong-willed and full of determination and willpower.
- Frank, outspoken, courageous and brave Aruvi does not hesitate to speak out against the injustice and ill-treatment meted out to her at a public forum like a reality talk show.
- However, she also wants love and affection from her dear ones.

### **TRULY UNCONVENTIONAL: Archana from *Mozhi***

- In the film, Archana is a woman who is both deaf and mute but is courageous and brave. Subtle yet strong lives her life independently.
- Archana can fight a man, and fight against injustice Her journey is about realizing love isn't about being pitied or being dependent but rather sharing one's life.
- She beautifully reflects her innermost fears and insecurities
- Proved that disabilities are no barriers to achievements

### **TRULY UNCONVENTIONAL: Madhi from *Irudhi Sutru***

- A young free-spirited girl realizes her passion for boxing.
- Struggles through life to achieve.
- Jumps every hurdle with integrity.
- Carefree, independent, courageous, determined but emotional.
- Does not let the feeling of love and its rejection get to her mind.
- Bold, assertive, and fights against injustice.

## Conclusion

Tamil cinema has always portrayed a wide array of female characters such as intense female devotees, brave princesses, scheming and evil persons and brave female officers.

Tamil cinema has always given many fantastic female-centric movies and unforgettable female characters. With the rise of new-age Tamil directors, a new dawn for female characters has started as well.

The evolution of female characters in Tamil cinema reflects a broader societal shift towards inclusivity and gender equality. Filmmakers are increasingly recognizing the importance of breaking stereotypes and portraying women authentically. These unconventional female characters contribute to a richer cinematic experience, fostering a more nuanced understanding of women's roles in society. As Tamil cinema continues to embrace diversity, the industry plays a crucial role in challenging preconceived notions and inspiring positive change in the way women are perceived both on and off-screen.

It's important to note that character design in films, including those in Tamil cinema, can vary widely, and there is a growing awareness and effort to break away from stereotypes. However, like any film industry, Tamil cinema has had its share of traditional character archetypes for female characters. Here are some common stereotypes that have been observed in the past:

**The Submissive Wife/Mother:** This stereotype portrays women as docile, submissive figures whose primary role is to serve their husbands and families. They are often shown sacrificing their personal desires for the well-being of others.

**The Damsel in Distress:** This character type is often helpless and in need of rescue by a male protagonist. She may lack agency and is portrayed as dependent on a male character for her salvation.

**The Glamorous Love Interest:** Female characters in some Tamil films have been primarily used as glamorous additions to the storyline, serving as love interests or eye candy without much depth or character development.

**The Sacrificial Virgin:** This character type is often depicted as pure, innocent, and willing to sacrifice everything for the sake of family honor or societal expectations. This character is commonly seen in melodramatic family dramas.

**The Femme Fatale/Vamp:** Some Tamil films have portrayed women in negative or cunning roles, often using their sexuality as a weapon to manipulate male characters. These characters are typically portrayed as villains or antagonists.



**The Modern, Independent Woman:** In recent years, there has been a positive shift in character portrayals. Some films have featured strong, independent women who pursue their careers and ambitions, challenging traditional gender roles.

It's crucial to acknowledge that there has been a significant evolution in character portrayals in Tamil cinema, with filmmakers increasingly focusing on more nuanced and realistic depictions of women. Modern Tamil films often showcase female characters with depth, agency, and a range of personalities, breaking away from traditional stereotypes. Filmmakers and audiences alike are recognizing the importance of diverse and empowering representations of women on screen.

### SESSION III

#### **From Myth to Mirror: The Multiple Faces of Woman in Tamil Cinema**

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*"...the purpose of playing [acting], ...is to hold, as it were, the mirror up to nature;"*

*-Hamlet*

Women in Tamil Cinema, right from the first Tamil/multi-lingual talkie *Kalidas* (1931) to *Koozhangkal* (2023), are either locked-up inside the kitchen and bedroom as 'angels' of the house, loving, inspiring, protecting and sacrificing or demonized as Freudian/ Jungian archaic mothers, personified Vegin Dentata or Medusa-head that one finds in Barbara Creed's monstrous feminine. They appear in the form of mother/mother-in-law or widowed sister or sister-in-law or even the other woman, shattering a joint family, torturing the angelic heroine/ daughter-in-law or making life hell for their husband or son. This prototype is an image which gets projected or reactivated in many facets of the Tamil social-drama film genre.

Laura Mulvey around 1970s, sensed that the mise-en-scene in movies is fixed by a coteri of illuminatti to cater to the appetite of a cacus of male viewers. She called it 'Male -Gaze' and as a reaction against it, she recommended 'Female-gaze'. In other words, the audience of cinema consists of both male and female viewers. Whereas, the content, the camera angles, shots and filming is such that only the female body is projected according to male desires and the female members of the audience neither are truly represented nor do get the surrogate-vicarious pleasure or voyeuristic experience. After this reaction from the feminist critics, male body was also filmed aesthetically and projected on big screen for the pleasure of women. In Hollywood, Daniel Craig, not only the Bond-lady, was seen emerging from the waves and walking voluptuously towards the shore. In Bollywood and Kollywood too, famous actors such as Salman Khan, Sharuk Khan, Amir Khan and Vikram or Surya started exhibiting their six-packs. Yet a few women characters mark their indelible presence with free- thinking; will to power and pro-active role in a progressive society as Julia Kristava reacted to Fredian/Jungian oppressive mother. Some even transcended the gender identities towards a humanist perspective to train our eyes for a Matrixial (matricial) Gaze as the contemporary psychoanalyst/artist Bracha L. Ettinger defines it.

Semiotics basically identifies signs into index, icon and symbol. Index is a suggestion of what to expect as the content inside. Icon is the best representative of some quality. Whereas symbol stands for something else. For example, if Kannagi is an iconic virtuous wife, her unbraided hair is index of her plight and the anklet in her hand is symbol of miscarriage of judgement. Thus, the image of Kannagi with her hair unbraided, the pointing left hand accusing and the right hand raising the anklet above her head together reads as the wrath of a virtuous wife victimized by miscarriage of judgement. However, woman was either subjugated or judged by their response to the actions of male.

The trick here is that the aforesaid prototypes alluded to in the opening passage of this article, remain stock characters such as Sita, Nalayini, Kandhari, Kannagi, Kali & Sikandi, Draupadi and Kooni. Only the theatrical mise-en-scene changes to contemporary scenario.

If Sita followed her virtuous husband into exile, Nalayini would even obey her husband in his extra marital relationships (Modern Love-Chennai: *Paravai Kootil Vazhum Maankal* 2013- Dir. Bharathi Raja). If Kandhari deprived herself of any pleasure which her husband would not enjoy (*Kanni Paruvathilae* 1979- Dir. Balaguru), Kannagi would torch down a city for having wrongly offended her husband (*Vada Chennai*- 2018- Dir. Vetrimaran). If Kali would kill the vile ones to save her devotees, Ambai @ Sikandi and Draupadi would take bloody revenge on those who disreputed them personally (*Aranya Kandan* 2011- Dir. Thiagarajan Kumararaja). In Koozhankal, the closing visual present's women patiently waiting for one after another to fetch water from the shallow spring, unlike the stock-visual of women quarreling with one another for water in draught hit areas, at public water pipes or at the rear of trucks supplying water. Does it suggest waiting as a virtue? Or have these women given up all their resistance and accepted the marital harassment as their inescapable karma?

All these characters are stock ones. Like imago in psychology they surface in another form or situation.

Characters such as Anu from C. Rudraiah's *Aval Appadithan* (transl. That's How She is-1978) recaptured in Althea Johnson of Ram's *Tharamani* (2017) could stand for themselves without allowing themselves to be judged in relation to male universe. They belong to militant feminism as Althea tells to her boy friend in the movie, "Whether sex [one-night stand] or love [going-steady], it's I who will decide it."

Karthik Subburaj's *Iraivi* (transl. 'Goddess'- 2016) presents a world where the matriarchal mother in comatose is only capable of shedding tears. The men who dominate the world are either imperfect or corrupted. All of them are failures. But the movie ends with the signature shots of Yazhini abandoned by her helpless husband and Ponni as her husband was killed, feel liberated and one with nature.

Like pathetic fallacy in poetry, it rains. While Yazhini enjoys the spectacle of nature's power, Ponni gets into it and enjoys herself being drenched. These women characters belong to Ecofeminism.

In Manikandan's *Kaaka Muttai* (transl. The Crow's Eggs - 2015), there is a complete absence of father-figure. The matriarchy is reestablished since all major male characters, mindless of their age and social class, remain children of different sorts. The kaakka muttai duo; the con-men duo (Thilak and Yogibabu), the frog-eating railway man and the Pizza shop owner himself are all children of different age groups and social classes. Its filmic narrative graphically demonstrates the process of commodity and sales as, the product, its performance, demand and prize as in base and super structure models and how the chain is broken by aggressive marketing in capitalist-corporate world. It narrates how consumerism degenerates common man into a thief. The mother of the two boys around whom the Marxist film revolves, is noble, dignified and tries to bring up her children in a dignified way. At one point of the film, a woman who is hired and paid to participate in a political rally tells the heroine-mother that the latter would not indulge in such lowly matters for money. At another point, the mother admonishes her erring children saying, "Only since I have made it a 'policy'[principle] not to beat children, I spare you. Behave yourself hereafter." Such are her values of life. She certainly possesses Ettinger's matrixial gaze.

Thus, though apparently Tamil cinema may appear to present merely stock characters mirroring male world, there has been conscious attempts made by many film auteurs to present women representing various aspects of individualism.

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## SESSION IV

### Women in Tamil Cinema: Challenges, Criticisms and Future Potential Trends

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#### The Beginning

In 1896, when **Alice Guy Blache** (1873-1968) presented *La fée au Choux*, it made history (her story?). She was possibly one of the first filmmakers to make a narrative fiction film and the first woman to direct. Alice had begun her entry into the film world as a secretary at Gaumont, a manufacturer of movie cameras and projectors, who had purchased a "cinématograph" the Lumière brothers. With Gaumont<sup>1</sup> being the world's first motion picture production company set up in that year, the French-born Alice Guy became its first film director. She was prolific and averaged two-reelers. Impressed, not just with the output but also the quality of her productions, the company made her the production director, supervising its other directors in 1905. Between 1896 and 1905, she was the only female director in the world. Her films experimented with special effects, sync sound, interracial casting, and colour tinting. The first woman to own her own film studio, she made 37 films between 1896 and 1920. Her last film had a tarnished reputation. Almost 30 years later, **Fatma Begum** (1892-1983), became India's first woman producer-director when she made *Bulbul e Paristan* 1926. Interestingly, both these films were fantasy films featuring fairies and miracles using special effects. She followed it with her second and last film as director *Goddess of Luck* in 1929.

#### Pioneering Women Directors in Tamil Cinema

Ten years after Fatma Begum led the way in the subcontinent, we moved to Madras and to Tamil cinema. **T.P. Rajalakshmi** (1911-1964), an actress, and producer became the first Tamil woman director. She directed *Miss Kamala* based on her own novel *Kamalavalli* or *Dr. Chandrasekharan* in 1936. She chose to celebrate her daughter Kamala who was born that year in this way. She has many firsts to her credit. The first film heroine in Tamil and Telugu with Kalidas in 1931, the first South Indian talkie. Until then, men played female roles too. Apart from being the first female producer in South Indian cinema, she was also the first woman director, screenplay writer, singer, music director. A social reformist, she brought her experiences as a survivor a failed child marriage and dowry harassment. A social reformer, a patriot and a believer in the emancipation of women ideology of the Dravidian movement, she staged plays against Sati, female infanticide & favoritism towards a particular caste or religion. *Madurai Veeran* in 1939 was her second and last film as a director.

**Anjali Devi** (1927-2014) was an actress, and producer with *Anarkali* in 1955 and went on to produce 26 more films after that. She is the model for young aspiring women producers of today. **Paluvayi Bhanumathi Ramakrishna** (1925-2005) was often referred to as the woman and possibly the first Ashtavadhani of Indian cinema for handling 8 departments in films she produced. Contributed in every department of filmmaking before making her presence felt behind the camera in Telugu and Tamil film industries. **Kommareddy Savitri** (1935-1981) honed her skills as a child artist but her directorial career took off with films such as 'Chinnari Papalu', 'Chiranjeevi' and 'Maathru Devatha' during 1968-69. She died at 46, but before that she had given female directors a launch pad. **Vijaya Nirmala** (1946-2019) directed her first film “Meena” in 1971 and went on to direct 40 films in Telugu, Tamil and Malayalam. She has the distinction of being the most prolific woman director in the world as per the Guinness Book of World Records.

These women broke the ceiling as it were and paved the way for other women filmmakers.

### **Women at the Helm**

It is often posited that more women at the helm of media will make women's stories easier to tell. It is often presented as a panacea for the woeful presence and representation of women on and behind the screen

The support for women-centric films will increase as more women enter production and step into the roles of film technicians. A quick glance tells us that more women have entered the industry over the decades and today we do have a significant number of them in decision-making roles

### **Women Producers**

Beginning with TP Rajalakshmi and Anjali Devi, P Bhanumathi, Savitri and Vijaya Nirmala today we have Jayachitra (Produced and directed 2 films), Sripriya (Produced 3 films, directed 6), Shobha Chandrasekar (produced 10 films, story writer for 50 films, directed 2 films), Jayachitra (produced 2 films, directed both), Radhikaa Sarathkumar (produced 1 film), Bhuvana Ram (2 films as producer and director), (Khushboo Sundar (produced 15 films), Soundarya R Ashwin (1 film producer, 2 as director), Nayanthara (4 films including *Kaathu Vaakula Rendu Kathal*), Hema Rukmini (produced 3 films including *Mersal*), Archana Kalpathi ( 4 films including *Bigil*) and Kavitha Pandian (4 films including *Kavan* and *Jinga*) commissioning film projects. They head production houses, are Vice presidents with production/distribution networks and work on big-budget star-driven films.

Interestingly though in recent years, the newly empowered women producers have all helmed male-centric popular films. Starring Vijay, Rajinikanth, Sarath Kumar, Sundar C Dhanush and Vijay Sethupathi.

## Directors

In the 80s we had Lakshmi Sivachandran (*Mazhalai Pattalam*), Jayachitra (*Pudhiya Ragam & Naane Ennul Illai*), Sripriya R (*Shanhti Muhurtham, Enga Ooru Attukaran, Nagini* in Kannada, *Naane Varuvein* in Tamil, *Dhrushyam* in Telugu, *Malini 22* in Tamil/Telugu), Suhasini Maniratnam (*Indira*), Revathi (*Mitr, My Friend* in English Hindi and Tamil, *Phir Milenge* in Hindi, episodes in anthologies *Kerala Cafe*(Malayalam) and *Mumbai Cutting* (Hindi)), B R ViJayalakshmi (Pattu Padava, Abhi and Anu, Abhiyude Katha Anuvinteyum) becoming directors of films some of which had women as protagonists. They were followed by Rohini, Janaki Viswanathan(*Kutty, Kanavu Meippada Vendum*), Sharadha Ramanathan(*Sringaram*), V Priya (*Kanda Naal Mudhal, Kannaoochi Enada* and *Adi Lakshmi Purana* in Kannada), Lena Manimegalai (*Sengadal*), Bhuvana Ram (*Righta Thappa, Love Me, Stupid*) in the 90s who focussed on women's issues in their films

The young brigade of women directors in the 2000s are Gayatri Pushkar (*Oram Po, Vaa Quarter cutting, Vikram Vedha* in Tamil and Hindi), Aishwarya R (*3, Vai Raja Vai and Lala salaam*), Soundarya A (*Kochadiyan* and *Velai Illa Pattadari 2*), Kiruthiga Udhayanidhi (*Vanakkam Chennai & Kaali*), Sudha Kongara (*Drohi, Irudhi Suttru/Saala Kadoos* in Tamil/ Hindi, *Soorrai Pottru/Sarfira* in Tamil/Hindi), Lakshmy Ramakrishna (*Aarohanam, Nerungi Vaa Muhtamkodu, Ammani, House owner, Are you okay, baby?*), JS Nandini *thiru thiru thuru thuru & Kolai Nokku Paarvai*), Madhumitha (*Vallamai Tharayo, Kola kolayan mundhirika, Moone moonu varthai, KD*), Halitha Shameem (*poovarasam Peepee & Sillu Karupatti*), Brindha(*Hey Sinamika & Thugs*) and Rohini (*Appavin Meesai*).

Rohini (*Silent Hues*), Lena Manimegalai (*Break the Shackles, Love Lost, Connecting Lines, Waves After Waves, Altar, A Hole in the Bucket*), Priya Krishnaswamy (*Baram*) and Karthiki Gonsalvez (*The Elephant Whisperers*) made their mark as documentary filmmakers.

Apart from this, we have women script and story writers, cinematographers, editors, sound designers, choreographers, costume designers, production designers and host of assistant directors in the field (too many to list out here). There are lyricists, singers and voice and dubbing artists. It was /is hoped that they together could bring in the female gaze and women-centric storytelling to narrate the realities of women's lives.

With so many women working in various capacities, we could expect more films with women-centric themes. Or so we think. Even a casual perusal of their body of work reveals that the films with women at the heart of it are few and far between. Why is this so?



## **Challenges for Women in the Tamil Film Industry**

Many women enter the film space to be able to bring their understanding of the world through stories that reflect their experiences. They want to be some change and combat the male perspective that dominates. But they end up conforming to age-old practices of hero driven films and compromise on their stories or perspectives.

### **Work Environment & Discrimination**

Often the work environment in the film industry is not conducive to women. Safety and comfort of women are the least priority in an industry that places demands on their physical labour and stretches their capability to adjust to shooting locations that have no facilities with little privacy for their hygienic needs and no concern for safety. Work hours are long and often go into days and nights. Late night commutes to their homes from workplaces makes it unsafe. They are criticised for choosing this profession but expecting special treatment or consideration.

### **Sexual Harassment in the Workplace**

Legion of stories abound on the predatory behaviour in the industry that make women vulnerable to all kinds of assaults and attacks from flirting, and verbal abuse to molestation to rape and violence. They are left to fend off the advances of male colleagues. At story discussion sessions, at locations, and at recording studios. When the MeToo movement burst upon the Indian scene, the accusations and allegations were made in Tamil film industry too. A prominent lyricist and director were accused by successful women technicians - Chinmayi Sripada on Vairamuthu and Lena Manimegalai against Poo Sasi to name two. But naught came of it. The two men are yet to be held accountable. If anything they continue to be respected and the women have paid the price for speaking up. Chinmayi was blacklisted and removed from the dubbing artists association while Lena's passport was confiscated and she was not allowed to travel to present her films at the International Film Festival

### **Censorship and Outdated Laws**

Stories with empowered women may have abusive and angry dialogues or scenes that depict men in poor light and women being aggressive or assertive. When 'bold' subjects are taken up, the censor board applies stringent cuts making it impossible to tell some stories. Much like the rest of the industry women too have to contend with conservative and outdated notions of obscenity or offensive scenes in their films. But when men make films with such scenes, we have heard of confrontations and violent behaviour with censor officials. So while a Karthik Subburaj or Arun get away with an Iraivi or Aruvi as a feminist film, and SJ Suryah flings shoes at a woman member of the censor board, women filmmakers will refrain from such scene taking or behaviour.

The 60 year old legal restriction (Bollywood Makeup Artist Union 1955) on women enrolling as make up artist in the Tamil industry is so outdated, that it took a prolonged legal battle by Charu Sharma to be allowed to practice her professions without interference. Banu Bahsyam was allowed a card and membership in the union in Chennai only in 2000.

Lena Manimegalai had to appeal to the Appellate Tribunal to get clearance for her first feature Sengadal since it featured some scenes 'denigrating Indian and Sri Lankan governments.

The recent cultural 'ban' and Annapoorani taking off air on Netflix speaks volumes on the challenge and criticism women producers/actors face

### **Sexism and Misogyny**

Sexism is rampant as it is misogyny. On and off screen, women are vilified, lectured to, and policed for dress, behaviour, life choices, and morality – Rajanikanth in *Padayappa*, Vijay in *ATM*, Partiban in *Pudhiya Padhai*, Characters such as Neelambari and Maggie are cases in point

Women in the film industry are subjected to character assassination easily and they are labelled 'immoral' or 'available'. That she has to have adjusted is a stereotype and it persists till date. Remarks and controversies surrounding Roja, Khushboo and Trisha in recent times by politicians and so called film critics in the state make it evident

### **Labelling and Stereotyping**

That women make boring women's sob stories and women are fit only to tell such stories is the attitude among producers, peers and even spills over to audience. When Sudha Kongara makes a Soorai pottru, they are surprised a woman director took up a male-oriented subject. This itself is a labelling and limiting. Stereotyping women filmmakers as unable to take up a wide range of themes is a restraint that is imposed upon them. Often producers tell them to take up light subjects they can handle. Cinematographers and ADs challenging their authority on the sets, stating they know better since they are more experienced;

### **Women on Screen**

The depiction of women on screen has been much talked about. The male gaze, objectification and the pendulum between reverence and rape where they are either deified or defiled. Mothers are sacrosanct or irresponsible, sisters and daughters bring dishonour to the family or are ungrateful, and women as mates are unsuitable unless they behave in accordance with the dictates for the chaste Tamil women – acham madam, naanam and payirpu. I have dealt with this at length in my Tedx Talk. Most Tamil films will fail even the basic female representation test – the Bechdel test let alone the more nuanced ones.

### **Scepticism and 'invisibilisation'/Lack of Screens/Distribution**

When women set out to tell their stories, many are scoffed at. Producers hesitate to back films that are purely women centric unless there are 'commercial' elements such as an item number or a big female star at its centre. The lady superstar has that kind of market value but be it Kolamaavu Kokila, Aram, or Imaikka nodigal, she plays the lead but ends up like a cardboard character- as a drug dealer turned criminal family that lures the men to their deaths, allows her brother to solve the crimes. Only Aram has some integrity to the main character.

If they take up political or sensitive issues, the moral police gang and the censor board steps in (Lena's struggle) and curb their articulation. Many powerful stories are not green lighted with the apprehension that it will shake the audience out of their comfort zone.

Misrepresentation of the modern empowered women as highly sexualised, flirtatious and basically reduced to being arm candy jars. The classic bell hooks that are dangled in front of us. The activist and psychology students in Ghajini, the scientist and undercover agent in Vishwaroopam and the entire team and the team physiotherapist in Bigil for instance. It's the perception of what men think is feminism or empowered women are.

### **Criticisms**

A valid criticism is that women restrict themselves by choosing only themes such as Gender gap, sexism, Dowry, Domestic violence, rape, honour killings, sexual harassment, acid attacks and trafficking while there are multiple issues that women can bring into the spotlight including overpopulation, poverty, sanitation, including Corruption, economic disparities, quick growth, Illiteracy, superstitions, Caste and the clash of ethnic, linguistic and caste identities, Religious, violence & terrorism, Environmental degradation vs real estate greed.

True, but often the women, the audience and peers in the film industry have been socialised to believe some issues have more significance and that the 'domestic issues' should be within the four walls. So in a way, they push women to justify the emotional melodramatic films and allow themselves to be labelled as promoters of Chick flicks. They are not assertive enough in the market-driven industry. Women end up making changes in their scripts, compromising on key female perspectives to cater to the market. Alternatively, they are aggressive in pushing the anti-male narrative into every script.

No significant difference in terms of genres or treatments of subjects or characters. Even with Nayanthara as a producer and lead actor, the film *Kaathu Vaakula Rendu Ksaathal* is troublesome in promoting sexist and regressive notions of bigamy.

Women often choose subjects they are familiar with and they make very Self-conscious films. All the gender issues are in an aggressive way thus losing out on the identification of the audience. Eg *The Great Indian Kitchen* in Tamil did not work since the issues are generic, the woman has no agency and her struggle was not culture specific and there is no change in the status quo at the end of the film. Also, they focus on serious themes such as mental conditions or disabilities and women's struggles that descend into revenge sagas or maudlin oppaaris.

Does this not augur well for women to continue making films? Of course not. The coming years are crucial with the shift in audience taste, viewing habits and the rise of cinema literacy.

### **Future Trends**

From the origin of women's films that worked with fairies and fantasy, we see a steady move towards more focused storytelling strategies. The move to highlighting Facts with a human interest angle through documentaries (Baram, The elephant whisperers), the blending of fact with fiction (*Kutty*, *KD*, *Aarohanam*, *Mitr*, *My Friend and Vikram Vedha*), the success at the film Festivals (Winning National awards *Soorai Potru*, *Mitr* and *Kutty*, and the Oscar award for the *Elephant Whisperers*) are all positive trends. I foresee that in the coming decade, we will see more of women filmmakers taking up the challenge to represent their kind on screen.

### **Content Driven Box Office Success**

Increasingly women scriptwriters are writing men and women characters with sensitivity and finding box office success. Gayatri blending both gazes as a writer-director duo with Pushkar, Sudha Kongara's sensitised men balanced with strong women Aishwarya directing the superstar in a secular cameo all give hope.

### **The Market Imperative for Gender-Based Storytelling**

Beginning with *Aruvi*, more and more producers and distributors recognise that marketing a film as feminist or a women-centric may actually work with 'woke' audiences as also the Dalit narrative finding takers (*Saanikagitham*). *Aram*, *Iraivi* and *Annapoorani* are just a few such films that found financial backing.

### **Emerging Women Producers**

Archana Kalpathi, Hema Rukmini, Kavitha Pandian are young and are now establishing themselves within their male dominated companies. Perhaps as they get more successful, they will be able to back strong female narratives on screen. Khusboo, Radhikaa all have extensive production experience and have been making women centric TV series and web content. This too may soon spill over into films and audiences has already been open to such themes.

## Film Literate Audience and Gender Sensitised Society

The post-Covid exposure to global film content on OTT platforms has an interesting side effect. Tamil filmgoing audience is now exposed to diverse storytelling methods and films that deal with gender issues.

Diverse Tamil film content is today finding more audience. Women are dominating streaming. Jyotika's *Ponmagal Vandhal*, and *Udanpirappe*, Nayanthara's *NetriKaan*, Aishwarya Rajesh's *Thittam Irandu* and *Boomika*, Trisha's *Paramapadham Vilayattu* Kangana Ranaut-AL Vijay's *Thalaivi*, and *Ramya's Queen* Season 8 are all hugely successful with the young and stay at home family audiences

## Crowdsourcing/ Funding and User Driven Content

The opportunity to find newer modes of film financing such as crowd-sourcing and international funding is a boon to many women filmmakers. Also, fan input to watch content suited to their ideological positions plays a crucial role. With more people willing to put their money where their mouth is, this might propel women protagonists and writers/directors to boldly take up stories of women empowerment. Role models are always in vogue and the success of *Queen* will inspire many others.

## Gender-Based not Women-Centric Themes

The one aspect I believe that will surely take up our mind space and our screens will be that we move away from the feminist narrative and veer toward more gender-based storytelling. Being a humanist is more important than othering the masculine or male stories. Ultimately, the goal for filmmakers especially women is not to merely carve a niche for women's stories but to truly be relevant by being inclusive, diverse, and gender sensitive.

## Exclusive Screenings/Screens

The success at the film Festival of films both feature and documentaries and more films being premiered at international festivals (Lena Manimegalai *Madathy* and *Unfairy Tale*) Priya Krishnaswamy (*Baaram*) and Karthiki's (*Elephant Whisperers*) should soon shift to the mainstream. Ideally, I would like to see screens reserved exclusively for women's films whether made by women or men.



There is not just a ray of hope but an entire spectrum of colours, themes, and options available to filmmakers in Tamil. Hopefully, they will take up the gauntlet.

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## **An Analysis of Sudha's Characterization Played by Actress Archana in the Film 'Veedu'**

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### **Abstract**

This article is to understand the characterization of the main character Sudha in the movie '*Veedu*'. To understand the characterization is to understand how the director presents the character to be received by the audience. The method used in this analysis is descriptive qualitative analysis. This is collected with the film transcripts and dialogues uttered by and to Sudha. In the study, it was found that Sudha's characteristics included Strong and Determined, Family-oriented, Resilient, Empathetic, and Optimistic. The research's results also highlight that she is the protagonist; she turns out to be the essential character from the beginning to the end of the film. This movie is prominently run by a female protagonist.

**Keywords:** '*Veedu*' movie, characterization, characteristics, female protagonist

### **Introduction**

Cinema has always been a fascination across generations. Audiences have been blended with cinema for a long time now even after witnessing changes in medium starting with street theatre to the current trend of OTT platforms. Cinema is a clean blend of acting, writing, art, dance, cinematography and many more. It is with the help of cinema that people were and can visualize many locations, eras, and even the future for that matter. Cinema has become part of people's culture and represents realities of the society (Klarer 76)

### **Tamil Cinema**

Tamil cinema is an integral part of Indian cinema, it is also referred to as Kollywood. Tamil cinema produces hundreds of films each year and is one of the largest film production industries in India. Tamil cinema also has a huge following across international audiences as well. It has been constantly evolving with coming-of-age new technologies and transformations.

### ***Veedu* (1988)**

'*Veedu*', a movie by prominent director Balu Mahendra was released in the year 1988. It stars Archana as Sudha the central character. The movie revolves around the hiccups and struggles a middle-class family faces in building a house. The movie won the National award under the categories of best Tamil Film and best actress for the year 1987. It was one of the films that lifted Tamil cinema to world cinema heights.

## **Character**

A character is a person portrayed within a storyline. The character could either be fictional or non-fictional based on the storyline. Characters are tried to be written or made in such a manner that it leaves an impression on the audience. The character can be the protagonist, antagonist, supporting character, or even a minor character. Characterization is a process, whereas the technique produces the character. According to (Aquino112), characterization is to understand the character's personality along with development referring to the character's development.

## **Review of Literature**

Many authors have showcased interest in Tamil cinema characters, especially women characters. Since cinema has a huge impact on fabricating the audiences' minds. This study is to analyze the characterization of the character Sudha from the movie 'Veedu'.

In his examination of the traits of the characters in the short film IBU, DA Rahmah (2021) defined morality as an action or personality in human social life involving the morality of the human characters.

According to the study by Meisuri, and Cindy Putri, Characterization was a fascinating subject that several academics worldwide utilized to examine the traits of characters in any literary work.

## **Research Methodology**

In this research, an analysis of the characterization of Sudha from the movie 'Veedu' is made using descriptive qualitative analysis. The movie 'Veedu' was chosen because it is one of the Tamil movies where a female character acts as the protagonist. 'Veedu' was released in the year 1988 and was critically acclaimed for many reasons one was that it portrayed the struggles of a middle-class family in a lively manner and the main character played by actress Archana for which she won the national award for best actress Tamil for that year. The film was directed, written, and photographed by Balu Mahendra. The character traits of the Sudha have been discussed in this research.

The method used to collect data is the method mentioned by (Ary, et al, 2002), in which the data is collected by observing the event such as movies, videos, or books. The film has been watched multiple times and for each of the characteristics that have been mentioned, the dialogue reference has been given in the form of transcription. The movie is available to stream on Jio Cinema (<https://www.jiocinema.com/movies/'Veedu'/3487628>). After the transcription of the movie, the next steps included identifying the major characteristics of Sudha.



## Results and Discussions

In the study, it was found that Sudha's characteristics included being Strong and Determined (having unbeatable strength and confidence), Family-oriented (prioritizing family over anything else), Resilient (recovering quickly from problems or drawbacks), Empathetic (understanding others and putting us in their shoes) and Optimistic (being positive).

**Strong and Determined:** During the start of the movie from the time stamp 12.00 – 15.00 we witness a long sequence of Sudha and family in search of a rented house, during which we find Sudha constantly determined and desperate to find a house. At 20.30 sec we find Sudha arguing with her grandfather about building their own house her grandfather is initially reluctant to, but Sudha convinces him to agree to do so.

**Optimistic:** Rain stops the construction of the house for about two days (38.17 sec), even after that she stays optimistic and restarts the construction.

After Sudha starts building the house, she understands that some thefts are happening on the site (54.00), she then daringly questions the contractor and the watchman fights with them lets go of him, and starts to build the house along with the workers.

**Family-Oriented:** When Sudha's sister (Indhu) asks for a separate room, at 23.54 sec we find Sudha in a dilemma since it would cost her another thirty thousand rupees extra, even after knowing that it would cost extra for her to do so, Sudha agrees to have a separate room for sister just because she asked for it.

Sudha's sister asks for a new dress for her school function at 42.00 sec which Sudha initially denies but at about 1.05.00 sec she buys her the new dress.

**Empathetic:** Even though there is an argument between Gopi and Sudha at about 28.04 sec, when Gopi comes forward to lend the movie he has in the bank, Sudha refuses to use it as it is kept aside for his sisters' marriage.

Sudha buys a saree for the worker who now maintains the work at the construction site. Manga does not ask for anything but Sudha herself understands her plight and does it for her (1.20.00).

**Resilient:** There is a time when the loan amount is being delayed and causes trouble in building the house further, (1.10.00 sec) she also visits her friend's house in request of money which her friend denies but she is still resilient and moves forward. For the final few stages of construction of the house Sudha needs the loan amount before the due date, while she asks her boss for the advance, he asks her out which hurts her though she cries to Gopi she doesn't reveal the issue and handles it herself (1.24.30 sec).

Towards the climax after her grandfather dies and she is shattered altogether, there comes up another issue of the metro water system (1.41.54), for which she must fight the law, which she does along with the help of Gopi.

### **Conclusion**

In 'Veedu', Sudha appears as a multifaced character with various characteristics that still hold a place in viewers' hearts. She stays as one of the constant characters to look up to when one needs strength and hope. Her being strong and determined and one who does anything and everything for their family to move to a better state in their life is one characteristic that needs much attention. Though she lacks the resources to fulfill her dreams and necessities, she never fails to stay positive and is always confident. Ultimately, this character played by Archana stays as a moral representation of women and middle-class livelihood to the fullest, it also depicts the everyday duties and struggles of ordinary urban people. Sudha being herself makes this movie relatable and important narrative for the audience.

### **Further Research Areas**

Character arc analysis of female characters of Tamil cinema.

Analysis of women characters by director Balu Mahendra.

Character analysis of characters played by actress *Archana*

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## **Role of Liberal Arts Education in Facing the Future Challenges of Women in Tamil Film Industry**

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### **Abstract**

Visual media, particularly films, showcase the socio-political and cultural ethos of a society. Participation of women in the film industry- on and off screen- has been stereotypical, and women have been undervalued and under-represented in off-screen segments. Film production could be broadly classified into the creative side and technology side. Women have a greater potential to succeed on both parameters but as of now only there is only one-third of females appear on-screen and even less off-screen. Gender equality has gained increasing momentum in current days and Liberal Arts education could be a means for women folk to realize their potential and design their future profession. Understanding Liberal Arts in perspective would create a road map for aspirants as it provides a plethora of choices to study, in addition to film-related topics. Liberal Arts studies will help aspiring women in the film industry, particularly in Tamil Cinemas, to hone their skills in a manner congruent to their expectations and style. They can opt for a mixed course in history, psychology, economics, etc. along with film studies. Knowledge of constantly changing technologies, creative thinking training, and hands-on audio-visual production training at the college level would benefit students, particularly females, to overcome gender inequality in the film industry.

**Keywords:** Gender equality, Liberal Arts education, creativity, technology, Tamil cinema

### **Introduction**

There exists a gap between academia and the film industry. Gaps can be bridged through Liberal Arts education that provides film studies as one of its programs. This assumes importance as it could address gender issues, particularly gender inequality and the film industry is facing gender discrimination. “Women’s employment in films 2022 remains astonishingly low, composers, writers, directors, and others working behind the screen, were overwhelmingly male last year, and women’s representation in these roles has barely budged in the previous 25 years. Only 24 percent of women work in all sectors of the film industry and there has been no increase in the last quarter century” (Elsesser, 2023).

Films can be the symbol of society, language, and emotions but they still *symbolize a binary order* with male dominance. Providing safe, non-discriminating working space for women in cinema needs awareness creation, advocacy, and policy changes. Encouragement of more women to take part in on-screen and off-screen initiatives by creating a support system through mentorship was the prime aim of WCC (Women in Cinema Collective) which is a foundation registered in 2017 in Kerala.

Women have made their mark in all walks of life, and the gender gap in most sectors has been bridged. In the Tamil film industry women's roles are stereotyped as observed by Amal Raj, 'a good woman is the traditional house-wife, long-suffering, pious and submissive and modern woman who asserts herself is undesirable and can never bring happiness to anybody' (Amal Raj, 1992). This trend has been changing slowly in on-screen roles, notwithstanding the fact the off-screen representation of women in Tamil films is so skewed that male dominance is evident. The cinema industry lags that only one-fourth of male representation has been reached. 'Although 63 percent of creative arts students were female, just under a third of artists represented in the arts industry were women', (Hall, 2018). College education in film-related studies in Tamil Nadu focuses on theoretical knowledge and technical inputs leading to a plethora of job opportunities for youngsters in mainstream cinemas, television, media, entertainment, advertisement, and event management.

Women are equally tech-savvy and creative, but societal impressionistic views, gender bias, and sexual harassment have been deterrents for them to forge forward and explore new ideas. 'In addition to the general educational requirements of Liberal Arts university, within which most film programs exist, there are two sets of skills relevant to film programs- technical and creative', (Orwin, 2001). On-screen roles provide some solace as actors can make a mark by their talent but the selection of roles is not left to their choice. Many women-centric films that are reproduced are branded as feminist and not suitable for universal viewing. Why cannot a female direct a war film, write a thriller story, use the camera efficiently, edit the film perfectly, or do technical work as males do? There is no lack of talent or willingness to work hard but gender bias and branding women as only on-screen attraction create a huge gap in female representation in the film industry.

'MeToo' helped to increase awareness about gender inequality in Hollywood, that working women in cinema is rising slowly. Only less than 25 percent of behind-screen- roles are held by women and 17 percent are female directors and writers. Increase in female representation has been only in the executive producer sector.' (Buchholz, 2022).

Although many movements, like Me Too and WCC, meant to empower women in films have been initiated, there is very slow progress in creating an equal status and number of female representations in cinemas. The same scenario has been founding the Tamil Cinema industry with male dominance and female representation one-third in both on-screen and off-screen roles. Liberal arts education can be one of the means to break this trend and induct more women into the cinemas on both screens.

## **The Interface between Liberal Arts Education and the Film Industry**

Wikipedia describes Liberal Arts education as the traditional academic course in Western higher education. Liberal Arts take the term art in the sense of a learned skill rather than specifically the fine arts. Liberal Arts education can refer to studies in a Liberal Arts degree course or to a university education more generally. Such a course of study contrasts with those that are principally vocational, professional, or technical as well as religiously based courses. Harvard College describes Liberal Arts as the Liberal Arts sciences that offer a broad intellectual foundation for the education systems do vary from country to country depending upon the historical conditions, whether countries were under colonization, and so on. Liberal Arts and Sciences can seldom be treated as disciplines like physics, chemistry, economics, and mathematics, where these subjects have been evolving over more than two centuries. Moreover, Liberal Arts and Sciences, per se, is a composite one; an amalgamation of different subjects barring vocational and professional courses. Therefore, the definition of Liberal Arts is generic and non-specific.

Over the years, academicians have become familiar with major disciplines like Chemistry, Physics, Biotechnology, Economics History, and so on. Each one is a single major discipline by itself. But Liberal Arts and Sciences is not a single major, however, it is a combination of different disciplines. Single major disciplines have universally accepted concepts, theories, techniques, and tools. Yet, these subjects can revolve around the defined concepts and theories and cannot go beyond them. Such limitations forbid critical thinking and creativity with the fear that such acts may violate the existing premises of discipline. After all, subjects are meant for gaining knowledge about reality, which in turn helps solve real-world problems by using critical thinking, and problem-solving. As per the available literature, Liberal Arts and Sciences courses in India offer Economics, Literature, Philosophy, Psychology, Politics, Sociology, Journalism, and in some colleges Creative Arts including film studies.

The term 'liberal' in Liberal Arts and Sciences warrants an explanation. The meaning of liberal is freedom; to go a step further, it means, not bound by any restriction. Freedom is a profound term, as Amartya Sen, a renowned Indian Economist, and a noble laureate, referred to in his book *Development as Freedom*, freedom is the be-all and end-all in achieving development as it enables individuals to exercise options over a range of freedom. Essentially, it denotes freedom to leverage other subjects for better understanding of subjects for general knowledge leading to a stronger foundation of knowledge. Education is meant for enhancing human capabilities; given the fact that no single discipline can do justice in understanding the real world in perspective. Therefore, more than one subject, preferably among social, natural, and physical sciences, besides mathematics and logic is needed for developing critical thinking, problem-solving ability, and eventually innovative skills.

Saikat Majumdar's book on 'College- Pathways of Possibility (Majumdar, 2018) is immensely worth a mention here. Saikat made a strong case in favor of *Liberal Arts Science Education* as a means of accomplishing this integration. He argues that disciplines are powerful modes of imparting a set of skills and a single discipline, however, could seldom produce robust results. But '*contra-disciplines*' can. By contra-disciplines, he means a combination of Computer Science and English, Philosophy and Physics, Literature and History, Chemistry and Anthropology, Literature and Mathematics, History and Biology, Music and Mathematics, Statistics, History, and Creative Arts are a few examples. Saikat cites Gardner's views on the *epistemic form of learning*, by this he means a *discipline is best understood in contrast with that of another*. Saikat is emphatic in saying that '*the understanding of epistemic forms is crucial to a liberal art science education*'.

Liberal Arts and Sciences, as stated earlier, have been started in several universities and colleges in India. However, the number of institutions offering this program is minuscule. The time has come when there is a need for more institutions either at the university or college level to offer Liberal Arts and Sciences and enable students to leverage the opportunity. There are instances, where many engineers or physicians have become innovators, but the Liberal Arts and science create a conducive academic ambiance and enable students to equip themselves better by developing problem-solving abilities, and critical thinking and eventually becoming an innovative entrepreneurs in the future. Flexibility is central to Liberal Arts and Sciences, with the freedom to choose to study and learn any discipline that students feel relevant in enhancing his /her capability and competence.

With the advent of digital platforms coupled with artificial intelligence, students in the future have an ocean of opportunities on the one hand and the capability to foresee, address, and face challenges on the other. In sum, students trained in Liberal Arts and Sciences have brighter chances compared to others to come out with flying colours in the coming decade in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## **Discussion**

A degree in Liberal Arts in India opens up a wide range of career opportunities, and a person can study contrasting subjects of their choice and identify their passion in due course of time. Societal expectations forbid interested female students from enrolling in film study institutions and even their parents would hesitate to admit their female and to some extent male children in cinema-related colleges. They falter considering the future of their wards as it is hard to flourish in the film industry and would be more difficult for female wards. Research studies confirm, 'Female characters in Indian films comprise only 24.9 percent, of the total, and none of the top ten highest-grossing films in 2014 featured a female in lead or co-lead role.

Less than 15 percent of all roles in Indian films depict women in Business, Politics, Science, Technology, Engineering, and Maths Professors, the majority as Teachers, Nurses, and Mothers. (Cinema and Society 2014). The uniqueness of the Tamil film industry is that it has seen the entry of movie stars into Tamil Nadu politics as pointed out by Periyannayagam Jesudoss, 'Politics and cinema has been inseparable in Tamil Nadu ever since star-politicians C.N. Annadurai, M.G. Ramachandran, K. K. Kalyanar, Karunanidhi, J. Jayalalitha, Vijaykanth realized the power of this cinema language and exploit it to the full for their political career', (Periyannayagam Jesudoss, 2009). It would be worth mentioning that most of the cinema stalwarts mentioned above became the chief minister of the State of Tamil Nadu or leaders of the opposition party. Even in this case, only one woman from the Tamil cinema industry could make it to the top of the political platform. In the country as a whole, the number of women from cinema to politics is abysmally low. In such a scenario a proper Liberal Arts degree with a mix of contra subjects would help students, particularly female graduates to create an impact in the cinema industry. International universities offering film study courses in Liberal Arts colleges are many. To list a few- The College of Liberal Arts- Colorado State University, Oregon State University, Middlesex College, Minnesota University, Adrian College, and so on. M.A. in Liberal Arts, Film Studies, University of South Florida, offers aspiring students the opportunity to develop knowledge and critical skills to enter the film industry with a view of films as an artistic medium and a form of cultural expression. As of now, in India, a few universities offer film-related studies in their Liberal Arts college, Symbiosis International, Bennett University, Flame University, Ashoka University, Loyola College, Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj University, Christ University, Gargi College, Jamia Millia Islamia, Kishin Chand Chellaram RV University, SRM University. It would be relevant to mention that SRM, Loyola, Kumaraguru College, and a few others in Tamil Nadu have been offering Liberal Arts courses but few have creative arts or film-related courses in their curriculum. In most universities, the course offered is named creative media wherein all types of media are represented. As a case in point, film studies (creative arts) along with computer science or history or literature or psychology can be offered as options for students, who wish to try their hand at the film industry. In India, many colleges and universities offer film studies separately wherein they can study only subjects related to cinemas and branch out to some segment of their liking like scriptwriting, editing, direction, music, story writing, technical work and so on. On the other hand, such Liberal Arts colleges offer contra courses for students to pursue which would enhance their knowledge and creativity. Aspirants have a choice to try a hand at film-related jobs and if find it not suitable they could switch over to some other stream that they had additionally studied. This opportunity would benefit female students and more would be able to easily enroll into such Liberal Arts colleges and follow their passion.

## Conclusion

Tracking the available literature and studies, it may be inferred that women in cinema, including Tamil cinema are under represented and this scenario has been changing but also we race. Females are equally creative and imaginative that many find it hard to express their talent in visual media for want of opportunity. Women are also technically skilled and capable of handling the technical side of filmmaking with proficiency. The problem that deters the entry of more women into this industry is the proof of their talent. With a proper degree in film studies, they could enter the industry like any corporate office and follow their passion. Since there is still hesitancy about girls enrolling in film institutes, Liberal Arts colleges and universities would provide a wider platform for them to follow their desires without any biased opinion. They can also opt for 2 or 3 courses of their interest and finally settle on any subject of their liking. In addition, they can opt for film courses along with some like history or literature which would make them more efficient and creative due to broader knowledge. India needs more colleges of Liberal Arts that offer film studies as one of its courses and it would play a role in bridging the gender gap in the Indian film industry. Tamil Nadu, which has the highest Gross Enrolment Ratio in Higher Education in India, could also be a beacon in paving the way for more female participation in its film industry by introducing film studies in Liberal Arts colleges and universities of Tamil Nadu. More empirical studies that vouch for the role of Liberal Arts in gender equality in the Tamil film industry are the need of the hour. There is a compelling need for a reliable database on women in the cinema industry and the number of educational institutions offering Liberal Arts and Sciences with film studies as one of its courses.

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## **From White Pages to the Silver Screen: The Novel *Red Tea*'s Depictions on Tamil Movie *Paradesi***

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### **Abstract**

This article undertakes a comparative analysis of the portrayal of poverty and suffering in Paul Harris Daniel's novel *Red Tea* and the Tamil film *Paradesi*. Both works delve into the harsh realities faced by impoverished communities, highlighting their struggles, resilience, and the systemic injustices that perpetuate their suffering. Through a thematic exploration, this study elucidates the narrative techniques employed by the respective creators to depict the socio-economic hardships experienced by the protagonists and their communities. Additionally, it examines the cultural and contextual nuances that shape the representation of poverty and exploitation in the two mediums. By juxtaposing the literary and cinematic interpretations, this analysis aims to deepen our understanding of the universal themes of human endurance and dignity amidst adversity. Ultimately, this comparative study underscores the power of storytelling in fostering empathy and social consciousness towards the plight of marginalized populations.

**Key Words:** Exploitation, marginalized, voiceless, injustice

In the realms of literature and cinema, narratives often serve as powerful vehicles for illuminating the struggles and resilience of marginalized communities. Paul Harris Daniel's novel *Red Tea* and the Tamil film *Paradesi* stand as poignant testaments to this notion, both offering compelling depictions of the enduring suffering experienced by the impoverished. Through their respective mediums, these works delve into the depths of poverty, exploitation, and societal neglect, portraying the harsh realities faced by their protagonists and their communities. In this comparative analysis, we aim to explore the thematic parallels and narrative techniques employed by Daniel and the creators of *Paradesi* to bring to light the plight of the downtrodden. By examining the cultural contexts and artistic choices inherent in these works, we seek to unravel the universal truths about human endurance and dignity amidst adversity, thereby shedding light on the socio-economic injustices that continue to afflict our world. Through this exploration, we hope to underscore the transformative power of storytelling in fostering empathy and advocating for social change.

Karl Marx's concepts which held that capitalists could only gain richer by lowering wages, hence diminishing the living conditions of workers until they had no alternative but to revolt, is echoed in the widely held claim that the affluent become richer and the poor get poorer. The subaltern, a topic of dispute in India even after independence, was illustrated in the current study.

Through his book *Red Tea*, Paul Harris Daniel addressed the topics of capitalism, feudalism, colonialism, and imperialism. The Tamil version of the English novel *Red Tea*, *Eriyum Panikadu*, served as the inspiration for the Tamil film *Paradesi*.

### **Aim of the Study**

The primary goal of the study is to shed light on social injustice and exploitation. It attempts to further understanding of the relationship between literary works and their film adaptations.

### **Thesis Statement**

The statement might be interpreted as a critique of the capitalism system, as the elite class gains from the inexpensive labour provided by coolies. The study explores the terrible realities that uninformed individuals face in Indian society. It focuses on how the hardships faced by the protagonists serve as a mirror for larger societal injustices.

The main concern of this paper focuses on the Novel *Red Tea*. Tea plantations in India during British colonization involved the forced labour of poor South Indian plains people to labour on tea plantations in the Eastern Ghat hills. The author of this novel Paul Harris Daniel was born in Agatheeswaran, Nagercoil in 1910. He was chief medical officer at Periakaramalai Group Hospital, Mudis Estate Hospitals in Valparai from 1941 to 1965, these hospitals treated people who were working in the tea plantation estates. He also acted as a union organizer. He and his family resided in a bungalow supplied by the nearby plantation company. At Valparai, he launched the Anaimalai Staff Association cooperative movement. He planned an event at Valparai Ground as part of his election campaign. In the unspecified year, he invited Mr. T M Soundararajan and LR Easwari. He had been a devout Christian but never took part in the Christianization of plantation labourers. He never stopped advocating for the welfare of plantation employees, their health, sanitary living circumstances, etc. The campaign for Bharat Scouts & Guides began at the Plantation School (Periakaramalai Aided Middle School), where Mr. P Israel was the Head Master at the time. On seeing the plight of the people there, he was moved to write a novel about the hardships of those people.

In 1925 plot of the novel *Red Tea* begins through the character *Karupanand Valli*, who is living in Mylodai, Tirunelveli district, Tamil Nadu, India. He earns his livelihood with the wages of any kind of labour. His coolie has not fulfilled any need of his own or his family. Kayatharu is the nearest village, which is the junction for all the villages around it. At regular interval, there is a fair in Kayatharu. Ill-treatment by the owners and employers is quite common there. The novelist had made sure to portray the existed culture and lifestyle of South Tamil Nadu. This novel also gives details of oppression done by the upper caste people on the publication of the book. The way the novelist has started describing about the dwelling Karupan (blacken) is very clear that it must be a house of an untouchable.

Once he went to Kayatharu searching for work, he meets a supervisor, who asks him to work in Aanamalaiestate. After discussing with his mother and wife, he points out a man named Vairamuthu, a fellow villager who has become prosperous after working there. Finally, they have decided to leave for Aanamalai estate. As Karupan and Valli, many people are procured by the same supervisor to go to Aanamalai estate.

After they are reaching to the place the very next day they have eagerly waited for the world, which is supposed to mark them wealthy. They are registered to work in estate soon after undergoing a medical examination. When the protagonist reported his illness to his boss, the supervisor disregarded it and forced him to appear for work after a few days. They finally realized they were in hell because of this experience. After a few days, she also became ill. She fought hard for a while to gain the go-ahead to visit the hospital. The hospital was in terrible shape. The patients were given the medication by the peon in the doctor's absence, but even he was unsure of its suitability. Valli's condition worsens and she even slips unconsciously as a result in the following months of June, and July the monsoon started and brought an outbreak of communicable diseases. In the rainy season, it was impossible to stay in their hut. They are staying with the family person called Muthaiah.

Labour contractors Kanganies, or masteries, are typically appointed by higher caste Hindus. They offered a cash advance to landless labourers from the plains to induce them to move to the hills. Labour historian Ranjit Das Gupta notes that this often meant that debt was transferred from the hereditary landholder or moneylender to the planter and contractor. The worker was not permitted to leave until their debt was paid off, which in many cases took years of work on the plantation, a situation economic historians characterize as 'debt bondage' P.H. Daniel's novelized account of labour conditions in south India describes living conditions on plantations. In *Red Tea*, Daniel details how advances are given and debt bondage occurs, the inadequate housing and poor health facilities, and the near impossibility of escape from this predicament. Many died of illness even at their viable ages due to the failure of the sanitation and ominous bloodthirsty leeches from all around the estates. Hundreds of people migrated from their villages but only a few remained alive these struggles. The story ends with the protagonist realizes if he had not chosen this life he would have not lost his little daughter and his caring wife, but the time past already and he had to go into the slush of the tea estate for another day's life and to feed his remaining blood to the leeches of the forest.

White pages to the silver screen this research paper draws inspiration from the novel *Red Tea*, a depiction of the Tamil film *Paradesi*. Bala is the writer and director of 2013, Tamil- film *Paradesi* with the meaning "Vagabond". Actor and actresses of the film are Atharvaa, Vedhika, and Dhansika acted realistic role. Music for the movie was composed by G. V. Prakash Kumar.

The movie portrays the lives of impoverished, carefree villagers who are persuaded to labour on tea plantations and how they are compelled to live out the remainder of their days as slaves without any possibility of escape or hope. *Paradesi* is set in a British-run tea plantation near Munnar in the late 1930s. A cunning middleman, sometimes known as a “Kankani”, convinces the residents of a poor Tamil village to work on a plantation in exchange for a respectable income. These innocent people had no idea that they will spend the rest of their lives as “coolies” at a tea plantation, forced into slavery. It's a double-edged sword: those who attempt to flee risk having their calf muscles severed, while those who grudgingly remain suffer from torture and fatal illnesses. To put it briefly, they are doomed to be slaves for the rest of their lives and cannot escape this torment.

In the early years of the British Raj, Raasa (Atharvaa) is a carefree young man who lives in a small village in the Madras Presidency. Having been abandoned at a young age, his grandmother raises him. A local girl, Angamma (Vedhika) falls in love with him. They get close and quickly let the whole Hamlet know they are in love after she, at last, admits her emotions for him. Raasa's mother disagrees, saying he should not marry anyone because he is unemployed and careless. Raasa then moves to the village nearby to look for employment. A kindly Kangani who thereafter accompanies Raasa back to his village is encountered by him. The Kangani provide employment opportunities for the locals at the highland British tea plantations. He assures them of good housing and generous pay. Raasa joins the Kangani, like a lot of the villagers, in the hopes of being able to send money home each month to help his sick grandmother. Watching him go makes Angamma and his grandmother heartbroken. Things are not as the Kangani promised when Raasa and his villagers eventually make it to the tea estate. With an iron grip, the Kangani and his goons control the plantation. The management of the British plantation has no regard for the laborers. Raasa befriends Maragadham (Dhansika), the wife and kid of the lone worker who has managed to flee the plantation thus far, and her small daughter. Raasa receives a letter from his grandmother stating that Angamma now lives with her after her family finds out she is pregnant with his child.

At one point of the story, workers realize that they have been made slaves to British businessmen. Raasa feels homesick and tries to escape from the place but unfortunately, he is caught by the Kangani's henchmen and cuts the left leg's main bone, just like every other worker who had tried to escape and failed. Many plantation labourers, including one of Raasa's villagers, perish quickly due to an outbreak. An English socialite requests that the plantation management treat the laborers with a licensed physician during tea parties. A Madras-based physician, disguised as an Indian Christian convert, visits the plantation with his English spouse. But instead of attending to the ailing employees, they are occupied with trying to convert them.

Towards the end of the plot, Raasa's time at the plantation draws to an end. Sadly, he is unable to celebrate Maragadham's illness and eventual death. After that, he adopts her daughter and bides his time to go. He is later informed, though, that in addition to inheriting Maragadham's debt to the plantation from her parents, and he also bears the responsibility of working there for nearly ten more years to pay it all off. He sees fresh slaves being brought in as he sits upon a hill and bemoans his lot in life. Angamma and their son are visible to him among them. He chases after them and, with tears in his eyes, declares that they have both ventured into the depths of hell.

The aim and thesis statement demonstrate the social injustice and advance our comprehension of the connection between literary works and their cinematic adaptations. Since the elite class benefits from the cheap labour supplied by coolies, it may also be seen as a critique of the capitalist system. Examines the awful realities that ignorant people must deal with in Indian society. It focuses on how the protagonists' struggles act as a reflection of broader societal inequities. Even though the story takes place during the British era, inequality is being prevalent in our culture today. Since laborers' cheap labour is used to enrich the wealthy class. Educated people or graduates in particular make meager compensation as specified in the quote, "The rich get richer and the poor get poorer" is an aphorism attributed to Percy Bysshe Shelley's *A Defence of Poetry*. In addition to that the above statement proves that, wealth inequality is a complicated problem with many underlying causes. It's not only a case of the rich doing and the poor contemplating. Wealth disparities can be sustained by economic policies and institutions, as well as systemic problems such as unequal access to healthcare, education, and employment prospects. The distribution of wealth is also shaped by sociological and historical causes. When talking about wealth disparity, it's critical to take the larger political, social, and economic structures into account. The comparative research demonstrates that to target the visual audience, commercial adjustments are necessary for the novel's adaptation into a movie. In addition, the film *Paradesi* told the story of hero portraits and concluded with the lovers' reunion amid the harsh existence of a tea plantation.

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# **The Impact of Global Producers on Tamil Cinema Distribution: A Comprehensive Analysis**

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## **Abstract**

This study delves into the rapid growth of Tamil cinema on the global stage, facilitated by high-end technology. The success of Tamil films in attracting global producers has shifted the dynamics in the industry, particularly affecting the traditional role of distributors. Examining the historical contributions of iconic figures such as Perarignar Anna, Muttamilarignar Kalaignar, Puratchi Thalaivar Dr. M G R. and Puratchi Thalaivi Jayalitha, who played pivotal roles in directing, producing, and acting in Tamil cinema, this research highlights the evolution of the industry. Formerly, legends like Nadika Thilagam Sivaji Ganeshen and Kadhal Mannan Gemini Ganeshan achieved remarkable success in generating high revenue, thanks to films produced by producers from other states like Andhra and Karnataka. During this era, every district distributor in Tamil Nadu played a crucial role. In contemporary times, however, the influx of global producers with compelling narratives and advanced technology has led to movies being released independently without the involvement of distributors.

**Keywords:** Film industry, producers, distributors

## **Introduction**

Tamil cinema has achieved global recognition, necessitating a closer look at the evolving role of film distributors. A film distributor holds the responsibility of marketing a film, with distribution deals playing a crucial role in the film's financing. The distributor influences the release date, exhibition methods, and availability of the film to the audience. Film distribution involves two main models: leasing, where a fixed amount is paid for distribution rights, and profit-sharing, where the distributor receives a percentage of the movie's net profits. In the context of Tamil cinema, understanding the distribution landscape is essential, with key distributors in Chennai including Bharani Studios, Rajkamal Film International, Stone Bench Creations Pvt Ltd, Avm Productions Pvt Ltd, Sathya Jyothi Films, A P International, Simbu Cine Arts Pvt Ltd, and Sivaji Productions.

**Tamil Cinema Distribution Areas and Methods:** The distribution landscape in Tamil cinema encompasses various territories, including Chennai City, N.S.C (North Arcot, South Arcot, Chengalpattu), Kovai (Coimbatore), Salem, M.R (Madurai, Ramanadhapuram), T.T (Trichy, Thanjavur), T.K (Thirunelveli, Kanyakumari), Other States (Karnataka, Kerala, Andhra, Mumbai), and F.M.S (Foreign, Malaysia, Singapore).



**Dubbing or Subtitling:** When distributing a foreign film, the distributor may be responsible for arranging dubbing or subtitling to make the film accessible to audiences in the target country. This is crucial for overcoming language barriers and ensuring the film's appeal to a wider audience.

**Censorship and Approval:** Distributors need to navigate through legal and organizational requirements for the exhibition of the film in a specific country or territory. This may involve obtaining censorship approval or other forms of authorization to comply with local regulations before approaching exhibitors for booking.

**Studio Distribution Offices:** Major film studios often have global distribution offices to handle the release of their films worldwide. These offices may operate independently or in partnership with other studios. The goal is to ensure a coordinated and effective distribution strategy on an international scale.

**Partnerships with Native Distributors:** In some cases, studios may decide to partner with native distributors in foreign markets. When this happens, both the studio and the local distributor's names will be associated with the film upon its release. This collaboration allows for a more nuanced understanding of local markets and cultural preferences.

**Copyright Retention:** Regardless of whether a studio distributes a film directly or partners with a native distributor, the studio typically retains the copyright of the film. This means that the studio maintains control over the intellectual property rights associated with the film, even if licensing agreements are made with foreign distributors.

**Independent Production and Distribution:** When an independent production company and distributor are involved, an international sales agent often handles the licensing of international rights. The agent negotiates with local distributors in each international territory, granting exclusive rights to the film for a specified duration. Similar to studio arrangements, the production company usually retains the copyright.

**Exclusive Rights:** The distributor in a particular territory typically secures exclusive rights to exploit the film across various media platforms, including theatrical releases, TV broadcasts, home entertainment, and more. This exclusivity is time-limited, allowing for a specified period during which the distributor has sole control over the film's distribution in that region.

**Producers and Distributors:** There are broadly three kinds of revenue-sharing arrangements between producers and distributors. The first is a minimum guarantee (MG), where the distributor guarantees a specific sum to the producer, payable in installments.

These arrangements enable producers to minimize their risk while affording distributors a larger cut of downstream revenues. MG arrangements are more common in regional film sub-segments in southern India. Respondents suggested that some producers prefer this option. The distributor takes on greater risk in MG arrangements; however, this doesn't need to be a function of unequal bargaining power in favour of the producer. For instance, the distributor might give the producer an MG to cover the costs of production, and therefore, may have a stake in the movie. The distributor may be taking a calculated risk on a movie if it has a star cast or a big director attached to it. At the same time, stakeholders indicated that if the distributor has given a fee up-front as an advance to fund production and the film does not recoup its value during release, distributors may face some difficulty recovering their investment. In such instances, producers are either required to offer a better deal to distributors in the next film cycle, seek out another distributor for funding, or pay interest on the funds owed.

The second arrangement between distributors and producers is a commission agreement, where the producer gives the distributor a commission or fee for distributing its movie. The degree of risk in commission agreements is more equally divided between the producer and distributor in such arrangements. Respondents indicated that larger production houses and distributors commonly enter into such arrangements.

As stated earlier, there is significant consolidation of production and distribution, largely due to the efficiencies proffered by such an arrangement. However, some respondents note that the creation of in-house distribution verticals by major producers and studios has impacted the ability of independent distributors to purchase and distribute films. Respondents highlighted that the capital required to acquire films produced by large studios in major markets is too high for most independent distributors. As a result, these distributors largely operate in smaller film circuits of the country, such as Assam, Odisha, and West Bengal. Further, despite these issues, independent distributors remain an integral part of the film value chain. They are required by smaller independent producers who do not have their distribution verticals. Moreover, several independent distributors provide last-mile connectivity in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities. Hence, even larger producers (that have their distribution verticals) must work with independent distributors to showcase their films in smaller cities to maximize film viewership. Further, large producers may opt for independent distributors if they expect to release a small number of films (1–3) in a year. Conversely, where four or more films are expected to be released, in-house distribution appears to be the preferred channel due to its cost savings. Overall, discussions with the respondents indicate that the bargaining power between distributors and producers is fairly balanced.

Some respondents indicated that, in Tamil Nadu, where there is a nexus between distributors and exhibitors, there is limited scope for producers to negotiate revenue-sharing arrangements, and this can sometimes serve as a barrier to entry. As mentioned earlier, in Tamil Nadu, although a majority of the theatres (60–70 percent) are single screens, 80 percent of these screens deal through only 7–10 distributors. Respondents noted that, in such situations, if producers are unable to secure a deal with a distributor, that producer cannot access theatres, because the distributor serves as a gatekeeper to theatres in that area. Respondents indicate that such situations are particularly problematic for independent producers.

However, as mentioned earlier, it is also important to note that distributors and single screens may be allotting screens based on their risk considerations. Moreover, there may be efficiency gains that the small number of distributors afford producers, as there are mostly single-screens in Tamil Nadu. Specifically, it could be expensive for producers to contract with each single-screen individually, and the transaction costs of locating and negotiating with each exhibitor separately could be high. The small number of distributors brings down transaction costs, as producers only have to deal with a handful of players. At the same time, however, deal terms should be fair and negotiable and not unilaterally decided by distributors and exhibitors. Such cases can only be decided on a case-by-case basis.

In April 2021, the Tamil Film Producers Council established a Release Regulation Committee to “de-clutter release and ensure that small-budget films get adequate screen time”.<sup>58</sup> As per a news report, the rules only permit one big release along with two or three small-budget movies.<sup>59</sup> In *XYZ vs. Tamil Film Producers Council & Ors.*, the findings in the Investigation Report stated that the “voluntary regulation of release of movies by the producers does not raise competition concerns”.<sup>60</sup> However, the Council relaxed the rules to allow producers to release any number of movies during the 2021 Christmas and Pongal seasons. Bigger pictures get more screens, leaving small- to medium-budget films out.<sup>61</sup> It is likely that the situation is temporary, given the backlog of pictures created by the pandemic. Thus, this situation must be evaluated on a case-by-case basis, especially as there seems to be a mechanism in place to give smaller-budget movies a fair shot at getting into theatres in Tamil Nadu.

### **Film Distribution in Tamil Nadu**

Film distribution is a critical aspect of the Tamil cinema industry, where distributors acquire rights to distribute films in different territories. They negotiate with exhibitors, including cinemas and single-screen theaters, to secure screening slots for the film.

In Tamil Nadu, as in many other regions, film distribution operates through various models. One common model is outright selling distribution and theatrical exhibition rights, where the producer sells exclusive rights for a defined territory to a distributor. Here are some key aspects of how film distribution works in Tamil Nadu:

### **Outright Sale Model**

- In this model, the producer sells all distribution and theatrical exhibition rights for a specific territory exclusively to a distributor.
- The distributor effectively becomes a producer in the eyes of the market for that territory.
- The entire risk associated with the box office performance of the film lies with the distributor.

### **Film Distributor's Role**

- The film distributor is responsible for marketing the film in the designated territory.
- Marketing efforts may include promotional activities, advertising campaigns, and other strategies to maximize the film's visibility and attract audiences.

### **Distribution and Production Companies**

- The distribution company may be the same as or different from the production company. In some cases, a separate entity specializes in film distribution.
- While the production company focuses on creating the film, the distribution company takes charge of getting the film to the audience, managing theatrical releases, and often handling subsequent distribution channels.

### **Financial Arrangements**

- The financial arrangement between the producer and the distributor depends on the specific deal negotiated.
- In outright sale models, the distributor typically pays a lump sum to the producer for the exclusive rights to distribute and exhibit the film in a specified territory.
- The financial risk associated with the film's box office performance is borne by the distributor in this model.

### **Development, Production, and Distribution Costs**

In the film industry, the studio (or Production Company) often bears the costs of development, production, and distribution. The director and producer may be engaged by the studio, receive fees for their services, and potentially be entitled to a share of net profits, depending on the terms of their contracts.

It's important to note that the film industry's dynamics can vary, and the distribution models may evolve based on factors such as the scale of production, the reputation of the film, and the financial arrangements negotiated between the parties involved. The outright sale model is just one of the approaches to film distribution, and various other models, such as revenue-sharing arrangements, co-production, and licensing, also exist.

### **Theatrical Film Distribution Process:**

The distribution process involves a unique path for each film. After completion, a licensing agreement is formed between the studio and the distribution company. Distributors determine the ideal market and the number of physical prints based on factors like audience, studio backing, and star power. Negotiations with theaters, including rate agreements and location selection, are crucial steps. Film distributors typically earn 30% of the overall net profits from theaters.

### **Television Distribution:**

Television distribution is a growing industry, with distributors ranging from broadcaster-owned companies to smaller niche players. Securing a distribution deal before production demonstrates a route to market and aids in raising finance. Feature film distribution often involves appointing a sales agent who handles distribution in various territories, and attending festivals and markets to secure deals with distributors.

### **Conclusion**

The current landscape offers unprecedented opportunities for revenue generation through film and television rights. Getting distribution deals right is crucial for producers and intermediaries alike, considering the expanding avenues for content delivery to consumers. Choosing the correct distributor involves evaluating financial terms, market reach, industry contacts, and expertise, ensuring a mutually beneficial partnership.

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# **From Hashtags to Heroines: Exploring the Intersection of Social Media and Women's Empowerment in Tamil Cinema**

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## **Abstract**

The dynamic landscape of Tamil cinema, once known for its stereotypical portrayals of women, has witnessed a significant shift in recent years. This transformation can be attributed, in part, to the burgeoning influence of social media, which has emerged as a platform for amplifying women's voices and challenging traditional gender norms. This research delves into the intricate interplay between social media and women's empowerment within the context of Tamil cinema.

Drawing upon existing research by scholars like Kavitha (2018) and Ramaswamy (2019), the analysis will explore how hashtags like #MeToo and #ChennaiMeToo have ignited conversations about gender-based violence and discrimination, finding resonance within film narratives that address these issues head-on. Films like "Kaala" (2018) and "Pariyerum Perumal" (2018) serve as prime examples, employing social media-driven campaigns to garner wider attention and spark dialogue on social injustices faced by women.

Furthermore, the research will examine how social media empowers women within the film industry itself. Platforms like Twitter and Instagram provide actresses and filmmakers with avenues to bypass traditional gatekeepers and directly connect with audiences, fostering a more inclusive and diverse cinematic landscape. The rise of independent women filmmakers and the success of crowd-funded projects like "Aatu" (2019) exemplify this trend.

This study aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse on gender representation in Indian cinema by shedding light on the unique and evolving relationship between social media and women's empowerment in Tamil films. By analyzing the aforementioned hashtags, films, and social media's role in empowering women filmmakers, the research seeks to demonstrate how digital spaces are redefining gender narratives and paving the way for a more equitable and representative film industry.

**Keywords:** Tamil cinema, social media, women's empowerment, #MeToo, #ChennaiMeToo, gender representation, hashtags, digital spaces, filmmakers

## **Introduction**

Tamil cinema, known for its rich cultural narratives, has undergone a profound transformation in recent years. Traditionally characterized by stereotypical portrayals of women, the industry has shifted towards embracing more diverse and empowering narratives.

This evolution reflects a broader societal change, with audiences demanding more authentic and inclusive storytelling.

The introduction of satellite television and smartphone-enabled social media has disrupted the traditional dominance of popular cinema in Tamil Nadu (Cody, 2020). This has led to the adoption of online platforms for movie promotion, with innovative strategies such as YouTube viral videos and mobile apps (Ramesh, 2020). These changes have also impacted the technology and storytelling methods in Tamil cinema, with a shift towards more advanced techniques and diverse narratives (Kumar, 2020). The influence of digitalization on popular politics is evident in the emergence of leaderless forms of mobilization and the fragmentation of dominant caste-based politics (Cody, 2020).

A significant catalyst driving this transformation is the growing influence of social media platforms. Once confined to the realm of physical theaters and industry gatekeepers, Tamil cinema now finds itself on the global stage, with social media acting as a powerful amplifier for voices and narratives. The dynamic interplay between the film industry and social media has redefined audience engagement, film promotion, and the very fabric of storytelling.

The intersection of social media and women's empowerment has been explored in various contexts. *Kumari* (2020) and *Lavilles* (2023) both highlight the role of social media in empowering women, with *Kumari* focusing on its role in discussing women's rights and challenging stereotypes, and *Lavilles* emphasizing its enabling role in women's entrepreneurial endeavors. *Lestari* (2020) further delves into the cyberfeminism perspective, discussing how social media campaigns can educate and motivate women. *Hamid* (2015) provides a measurement model for women's empowerment through social media, identifying five key dimensions: economy, social and cultural, legal, political, and psychological.

This research aims to explore the intricate relationship between Tamil cinema's changing landscape and the dynamic role played by social media. From challenging traditional norms to amplifying women's voices, social media has become a driving force in shaping the narratives and representation within the industry. The following sections will delve into the specifics of this intersection, examining how hashtags, films, and the empowerment of women within the industry contribute to this transformative journey.

## **Literature Review**

The convergence of social media and the promotion of women's empowerment within the realm of Tamil cinema is an intricate and multifaceted subject.



In their respective works, *Han* (2021) underscores the pivotal role that social media plays in fostering empowerment among women. Han particularly underscores the importance of establishing a unified hashtag to facilitate discussions on gender equality issues and delves into the potential for transformative discourse and collective action.

Conversely, *Karupiah* (2016) sheds light on the obstacles inherent in challenging entrenched feminine ideals within the context of Tamil cinema. These challenges, as identified by Karupiah, may pose limitations to the efficacy of social media in advancing women's empowerment.

Taking a broader perspective, *Bao* (2019) contextualizes the discourse by exploring the #MeToo movement and its far-reaching impact on women's empowerment through the medium of social media. By examining the interplay between social media and women's empowerment in the context of Tamil cinema, these scholars provide a nuanced understanding of the complexities and dynamics at play in this evolving landscape.

The incorporation of social media within the Tamil film industry has notably transformed promotional strategies, ushering in a departure toward more inventive and unconventional approaches (Ramesh, 2020). However, this paradigm shift has concurrently brought into focus the entrenched gender biases and discriminatory practices present in the industry, especially within the domain of Internet Television Production (Mehta, 2019).

Notably, female celebrities have become targets of public humiliation and body-shaming on social media platforms, introducing complexities into the dynamics of stardom and fandom (Mitra, 2020). These challenges highlight broader trends in digital media, where gender representations often succumb to the influence of prevailing ideologies (Popa, 2015). The dual impact of social media on promotional strategies and the exposure of gender-related issues in the Tamil film industry underscores the multifaceted nature of the industry's evolving landscape.

## **Hashtags and Film Narratives**

### **#MeToo Movement**

A variety of studies have delved into the influence and intricacies of the #MeToo movement within the realm of social media. *Zeng* (2020) and *Li* (2020) both accentuate the pivotal role played by digital technologies in molding feminist activism. Zeng's focus lies on the movement's inception in China, while Li's exploration centers around the framing of the movement on Sina Weibo.

The #MeToo movement, initiated on social media, gained global prominence by providing survivors of sexual harassment a platform to share their stories. The hashtag transcended borders, industries, and cultures, emphasizing the widespread nature of the issue.

#MeToo brought previously marginalized voices into the public discourse, challenging power structures and fostering a sense of empowerment among survivors. Social media acted as a democratizing force, allowing individuals to share their experiences without traditional gatekeepers.

While #MeToo facilitated important conversations, it also faced backlash, with some critics questioning its impact and expressing concerns about false accusations.

The movement prompted discussions about due process, the limitations of online activism, and the need for institutional change.

### **#Chennai MeToo Movement**

#ChennaiMeToo reflects a localized manifestation of the broader #MeToo movement, focusing on issues within Chennai, Tamil Nadu, and context. This regional specificity allows for a more targeted examination of the challenges faced by individuals in a specific cultural and industry setting.

#ChennaiMeToo expands the conversation to include intersectional issues, considering how gender, caste, and cultural factors intersect in the experiences of harassment survivors. This intersectional lens contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of power dynamics within the region. The hashtag sheds light on the dynamics within specific industries, such as the film and media sectors in Chennai. It highlights power imbalances, exploitation, and the need for structural reforms within these localized contexts.

#ChennaiMeToo fosters a sense of community support by providing a platform for survivors to connect, share resources, and collectively address issues. The local focus allows for more targeted advocacy and pressure on regional institutions to address systemic problems.

In a distinct approach, Austin (2022) employs the expectancy violation theory to evaluate the efficacy of the #MeToo hashtag. On the other hand, Bogen (2021) utilizes geospatial analysis to map tweets discussing sexual violence and the #MeToo movement. These collective studies underscore the intricate and multifaceted nature of the #MeToo movement and emphasize the potential of social media not only to amplify but also to shape its impact. Together, these findings contribute to a comprehensive understanding of how digital platforms intersect with and contribute to the complexities of the #MeToo movement.

The impact of social inequality and humanity on film narratives is clearly evident in the Tamil films "Kaala" (2018) and "Pariyerum Perumal" (2018), both of which delve into the challenges faced by marginalized communities (2023). These movies also serve as reflections of the evolving landscape of technology and storytelling methods in Tamil cinema, with a specific emphasis on themes such as violence, societal awareness, and the portrayal of heroes (Kumar 2020). However, the conventional narrative structures face challenges posed by the demand for a different perspective on cinematic storytelling, especially when addressing experiences insufficiently represented by traditional forms (Knudsen 2010).

The influence of films on audiences is further explored through an analysis of the animated short film "Father and Daughter" (2000), shedding light on moments of narrative impact and their profound effects on viewers (Suckfüll 2010). This exploration extends beyond conventional cinematic norms, highlighting the transformative potential of storytelling in challenging societal norms and fostering a deeper connection between the narrative and the audience.

The influence of social media movements, particularly those related to gender and activism, on film narratives is a compelling area of exploration. Analyzing case studies from "Kaala" (2018) and "Pariyerum Perumal" (2018) provides insight into how these films engage with and respond to societal discourses.

### ***Kaala (2018)***

"Kaala," directed by Pa. Ranjith, addresses socio-political issues, including the struggles of marginalized communities. Social media movements often catalyze discussions on inequality, providing filmmakers with contemporary social contexts to explore.

The #MeToo movement, for instance, emphasizes empowerment and the challenge of power imbalances. "Kaala" may incorporate themes of empowerment, using the protagonist to challenge oppressive forces and highlight the need for social justice. Social media movements amplify voices that have been historically marginalized or silenced. The film might reflect this amplification by giving a platform to characters representing the underprivileged, encouraging empathy and awareness.

### ***Pariyerum Perumal (2018)***

"Pariyerum Perumal," directed by Mari Selvaraj, delves into caste dynamics in Tamil Nadu, presenting a critical examination of discrimination.

Social media discussions on caste-related issues may have influenced the narrative, encouraging a more nuanced portrayal of the struggles faced by marginalized communities. Movements often advocate for intersectionality, recognizing the interconnectedness of social issues.

The film may reflect this by exploring the intersection of caste, gender, and class, showcasing a holistic perspective on societal challenges. Social media movements can be a platform for activism, driving change, and challenging societal norms. "Pariyerum Perumal" may engage in a dialogue with these movements, contributing to the discourse on social reform and justice.

### **Social Media Empowerment within the Film Industry**

Instagram has emerged as a potent tool for film promotion, credited to its HIITS technology and substantial engagement value, as indicated by research by *Pattanayak* (2023). Contrarily, the impact of a star's Twitter presence on box office performance remains ambiguous, with some studies, such as the one conducted by Treme in 2014, suggesting a potentially negative effect, particularly in foreign markets.

In contrast, Instagram has demonstrated a positive impact on psychological empowerment, especially for women. Mechanisms such as self-efficacy and a sense of community have been identified as contributing factors, according to findings from Riquelme's research in 2018. This empowerment extends beyond the realm of film promotion to encompass women entrepreneurs, who leverage Instagram to share information, engage in interactions, and collaborate. Ultimately, these entrepreneurs utilize the platform as a means of self-empowerment, as highlighted by Dewi's study in 2020.

Social media platforms such as Meta, Twitter, and TikTok have been identified as pivotal in advancing diversity and inclusion within the cinematic landscape, according to research by Putriani (2022). Nevertheless, challenges persist in ensuring the genuine inclusivity of these platforms, particularly in the realm of health promotion and well-being initiatives, as noted by O'Mara (2013).

The potential of online film distribution to democratize access and foster a more diverse and inclusive film-viewing culture is underscored in the research by Huffer (2017). This points towards a transformative role in breaking down traditional barriers in the cinematic landscape.

However, public service media must realign their social media strategies to bolster cultural citizenship, particularly in domains like sports, as emphasized in the research conducted by Ramon (2021). This signifies the importance of intentional efforts in utilizing social media to cultivate a more inclusive and culturally responsive environment within various sectors.

*Redding* (1997) and *Hurd* (2006) offer thorough depictions of trailblazing women directors, highlighting the profound influence they have wielded within the film industry. Delving into the creative engagement of women in filmmaking, Hughes-Freeland (2011) directs attention to Indonesian cinema, while Foster (1997) scrutinizes the cinematic contributions of black and Asian women filmmakers. Collectively, these studies provide comprehensive insights into the impactful roles played by women across different cultural and cinematic contexts.

## **Research Methodology**

### **Research Design**

This study employs a mixed-methods research design to thoroughly investigate the intersection of social media and women's empowerment in Tamil cinema. The qualitative component involves an in-depth content analysis of two prominent films, "Pariyerum Perumal" and "Kaala," along with an examination of social media discussions and campaigns.

### **Content Analysis**

**Selection of Films:** Employing a purposive sampling approach, two films, "Pariyerum Perumal" and "Kaala," were chosen due to their recent prominence in addressing women's issues and engaging with social concerns.

**Hashtag Analysis:** A systematic review of the #ChennaiMeToo Movement and #MeToo Movement related to gender empowerment and social issues in Tamil cinema is conducted. The focus is on campaigns that gained traction on platforms like Twitter and Instagram.

### **Data Analysis**

#### **Thematic Coding**

Qualitative content analysis involves identifying and coding themes within the films "Pariyerum Perumal" and "Kaala." This includes an examination of the portrayal of women, engagement with social issues, and the role of social media campaigns.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The study is grounded in social constructionist theories, emphasizing the media's role in shaping societal perceptions and norms. Additionally, feminist media theories provide a critical lens through which to analyze the empowerment narratives depicted in the selected films.

## **Ethical Considerations**

Ensuring Privacy and Consent: Prioritizing the privacy and consent of individuals whose social media data is utilized in the study.

Adherence to Ethical Guidelines: Following ethical guidelines in content analysis, with due respect to the artistic intent of filmmakers, and acknowledging the potential impact on the cultural fabric.

This comprehensive methodology aims to capture the multifaceted aspects of the intersection between social media and women's empowerment in Tamil cinema, employing qualitative approaches for a nuanced understanding.

## **Findings and Analysis**

The examination of hashtags, films, and the role of social media in empowering women in Tamil cinema reveals a nuanced and dynamic landscape that reflects the evolving narrative of women's empowerment within the industry.

### **Hashtag Analysis**

The systematic review of hashtags, particularly #ChennaiMeToo Movement and #MeToo Movement, illustrates their significant impact in amplifying conversations around gender-based violence and discrimination. The widespread use of these hashtags on platforms such as Twitter and Instagram indicates a growing awareness and engagement with social issues within Tamil cinema. The qualitative analysis of discussions associated with these hashtags provides insights into the depth of public discourse and the collective demand for change.

### **Film Analysis**

The content analysis of "Pariyerum Perumal" reveals a poignant portrayal of women, breaking away from traditional stereotypes. The film not only addresses social issues but also highlights the role of women in challenging societal norms. The thematic coding brings to light the nuanced representation of female characters, contributing to a broader narrative of empowerment. Social media campaigns associated with the film further enhance its reach and impact, fostering conversations beyond the silver screen.

Similarly, the analysis of "Kaala" underscores the film's commitment to portraying empowered female characters. Thematic coding reveals the multifaceted roles women play in the narrative, challenging power structures and societal norms.

The integration of social media-driven campaigns has not only expanded the film's audience but has also catalyzed discussions on the intersectionality of gender and other social issues.

### **Social Media's Role in Empowering Women**

The qualitative analysis of social media's role in empowering women within the film industry itself demonstrates a paradigm shift. Actresses and filmmakers, leveraging platforms like Twitter and Instagram, have successfully bypassed traditional gatekeepers. The direct connection with audiences has fostered a more inclusive and diverse cinematic landscape, challenging the industry's historical gender norms.

### **Cross-Analysis**

Cross-referencing the findings from hashtag analysis, film content analysis, and social media's role in empowering women provides a holistic understanding of the interconnected nature of these elements. The resonance between social media movements and film narratives demonstrates a symbiotic relationship, with each reinforcing and amplifying the other.

Overall, the findings affirm that social media plays a pivotal role in shaping and amplifying narratives of women's empowerment in Tamil cinema. The intersection of hashtags, films, and social media catalyzes change, challenging traditional norms and contributing to a more equitable and representative film industry. This comprehensive analysis contributes valuable insights to the ongoing discourse on gender representation in Indian cinema.

### **Contribution to Gender Representation Discourse**

The depiction of gender in Indian cinema is a multifaceted and intricate subject, as underscored by various scholarly studies. *Jaggi* (2023) and *Tere* (2012) both underscore the necessity for a more nuanced and inclusive representation of women in Indian cinema, with Jaggi specifically directing attention to children's TV programming. *Kumari* (2023) explores the psychoanalytic-feminist perspective, contending that the industry's phallocentric nature perpetuates gender bias. Taking a sociological stance, *Rad* (2016) scrutinizes the portrayal of women in specific Indian films, shedding light on the potential for both victimization and empowerment.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, this research sheds light on the intricate interplay between social media and women's empowerment in Tamil cinema, marking a transformative shift from traditional portrayals to a more inclusive and diverse narrative.

The exploration of hashtags, films like "Pariyerum Perumal" and "Kaala," and the role of social media platforms have provided nuanced insights into the evolving landscape.

The analysis of hashtags, particularly the #ChennaiMeToo Movement and #MeToo Movement, reveals a substantial impact in fostering conversations around gender-based violence and discrimination. These online movements serve as powerful catalysts, bridging the gap between digital activism and on-screen narratives, amplifying the voices of women, and challenging societal norms. The content analysis of films showcases "Pariyerum Perumal" and "Kaala" as exemplars of the industry's departure from one-dimensional portrayals of women. Thematic coding elucidates the nuanced representations, portraying empowered female characters that contribute to broader societal narratives. Social media-driven campaigns associated with these films extend their impact beyond the cinematic realm, sparking crucial dialogues on social injustices faced by women.

Social media's role in empowering women within the film industry emerges as a transformative force. Actresses and filmmakers utilize platforms like Twitter and Instagram to directly connect with audiences, challenging traditional gatekeepers and fostering a more inclusive cinematic landscape. Guided by social constructionist theories and feminist media theories, this study critically analyzes the evolving narratives, emphasizing the media's role in shaping societal perceptions and norms. The findings underscore the potential for social media to redefine gender narratives and contribute to a more equitable and representative film industry. Ethical considerations remain paramount in this digital exploration, emphasizing the need for privacy and consent when utilizing social media data. Adhering to ethical guidelines in content analysis ensures respect for filmmakers' artistic intent and acknowledges the potential cultural impact of the narratives presented.

In essence, this research contributes to the ongoing discourse on gender representation in Indian cinema by offering a comprehensive understanding of the intersection between social media and women's empowerment in Tamil cinema. As digital spaces continue to evolve, their impact on shaping narratives and fostering societal change is undeniable, paving the way for a more equitable and inclusive cinematic future.

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## **Koozhangal Stories: Unravelling Global Perspectives on Tamil Cinema's Cultural Impact and Cinematic Evolution**

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### **Abstract**

This research explores the profound impact and cinematic evolution of Tamil cinema on a global scale, with a specific focus on the critically acclaimed film "Koozhangal" (Pebbles). As the film encapsulates a rich tapestry of storytelling aesthetics, cultural nuances, and emotional depth, this study aims to unravel the global perspectives on Tamil cinema's cultural impact and its evolving cinematic language.

The film "Koozhangal" serves as a captivating case study, drawing audiences into its world through a pronounced film language that accentuates its aesthetics. The narrative follows a father-son duo on a journey through arid landscapes, skilfully weaving themes of trauma, fragile masculinity, and the resilience of the young and innocent. The film's central axis, the father's irrepressible anger, is juxtaposed with moments of levity, creating a nuanced exploration of human emotions.

The research delves into the film's visuals, exploring how the director, Vinodh Raj, employs minimal yet affecting dialogues, rustic settings, and grounded performances to create a realistic cinematic experience. The study highlights the director's focus on preserving the entertainment factor while avoiding the pitfalls of self-serious pretentiousness often associated with art films.

"Koozhangal" incorporates disjointed scenes that serve as poetic interludes, enhancing the overall thematic resonance of the film. A particular scene involving a breastfeeding mother in a barren land juxtaposed with a statue of a goddess further exemplifies the film's depth in portraying societal ironies.

Importantly, the research positions "*Koozhangal*" within the broader context of global perceptions of Tamil cinema, demonstrating how the film transcends cultural boundaries. It underscores the film's ability to communicate tragedy with subtlety, challenging traditional notions of emotional storytelling and offering a unique perspective on the inherent tragedy woven into the narrative.

**Keywords:** Global perspectives, Tamil cinema, cultural impact, cinematic evolution, Koozhangal.

### **Introduction**

In the expansive universe of global cinema, Tamil cinema emerges as a vibrant tapestry that weaves together diverse narratives, cultural intricacies, and distinctive storytelling aesthetics.

Within this realm, the cinematic gem "*Koozhangal*" (Pebbles) transcends its regional origins, beckoning audiences worldwide to partake in a profound exploration of the cultural impact and cinematic evolution of Tamil cinema. This research embarks on an intricate journey to unravel the layers of influence embedded within the captivating narrative and visual language of "*Koozhangal*."

Tamil feminists recognize and celebrate the diverse experiences of motherhood while challenging societal expectations that often limit women to traditional roles as caregivers. The movement seeks to destigmatize choices related to motherhood, encouraging women to define their paths without being constrained by societal norms.

At its essence, "*Koozhangal*" stands as an exemplary case study, inviting viewers into a world where storytelling aesthetics, cultural nuances, and emotional depth coalesce seamlessly. The study endeavors to illuminate the global perspectives that swirl around Tamil cinema's profound impact, with a particular focus on the evolving cinematic language embodied by this cinematic masterpiece.

The film's narrative unfolds a gripping saga, as a father-son duo traverses arid landscapes, delving into themes of trauma, fragile masculinity, and the resilient innocence of youth. The film's thematic core, anchored by the father's irrepressible anger, intertwines with moments of levity, crafting a nuanced exploration of universal human emotions that resonates across cultures.

Tamil feminism extends its focus to the unique challenges faced by elderly women. Activists work towards addressing issues of neglect, abuse, and isolation faced by elderly women, highlighting the importance of a life cycle approach in feminist advocacy.

The research meticulously dissects the film's visual elements, examining director Vinothraj's adept use of minimal yet impactful dialogues, rustic settings, and grounded performances to craft a cinematic experience that feels undeniably authentic. Notably, the director's deliberate emphasis on preserving the entertainment factor sets "*Koozhangal*" apart, steering clear of the pitfalls often associated with self-serious pretentiousness in the realm of art films.

"*Koozhangal*" artfully incorporates disjointed scenes, serving as poetic interludes that enhance the overall thematic resonance of the film. A particularly poignant example involves a breastfeeding mother in a barren land juxtaposed with a statue of a goddess, offering a vivid portrayal of societal ironies and prompting viewers to contemplate the intricacies of the human condition.

Crucially, this research situates "Koozhangal" within the broader context of global perceptions of Tamil cinema, illustrating how the film transcends geographical and cultural boundaries. It underscores the film's unique ability to communicate tragedy with subtlety, challenging conventional notions of emotional storytelling and presenting a distinctive perspective on the inherent tragedy interwoven into the narrative.

Acknowledging the intersection of gender and mental health, Tamil feminists advocate for the destigmatization of mental health issues and the provision of accessible mental health resources. They emphasize the impact of societal expectations and discrimination on women's mental well-being.

As we navigate the intricate intersections of cultural impact and cinematic evolution, "Koozhangal Stories" stands as a compelling testament to the enduring power of Tamil cinema, captivating and resonating with audiences worldwide.

## **Methodology**

This research employs a multi-faceted methodology to comprehensively explore the global perspectives on Tamil cinema's cultural impact and cinematic evolution through an in-depth analysis of the critically acclaimed film "*Koozhangal*" (Pebbles). The methodology encompasses a combination of qualitative and interpretative approaches, ensuring a nuanced understanding of the film's narrative intricacies, visual elements, and its reception on the global stage.

A comprehensive review of existing scholarly literature on Tamil cinema, global cinema studies, and film analysis forms the foundation of this research. This literature review provides insights into the historical context, cultural significance, and theoretical frameworks relevant to the study. A detailed analysis of "*Koozhangal*" serves as the primary source of data. The film is dissected to understand its storytelling techniques, visual aesthetics, and thematic elements. This involves scene-by-scene examination, identification of narrative motifs, and an exploration of directorial choices to uncover the cinematic language employed by Vinothraj.

Artistic expression is a powerful tool for Tamil feminists, serving as a form of resistance and storytelling. Through literature, music, dance, and visual arts, women artists communicate their experiences and perspectives, challenging societal norms and fostering a sense of empowerment. Tamil feminists actively engage in preserving and promoting Tamil culture, recognizing its significance in shaping identities. However, they also critically assess cultural practices that perpetuate gender inequalities and work towards reinterpreting traditions to align with feminist values.

Visual elements are scrutinized, including cinematography, mise-en-scène, and editing. This involves an examination of the use of colour, framing, and camera movement to discern how these elements contribute to the overall impact of the film and its cultural resonance. Interviews with the director, Vinothraj, as well as key members of the cast and crew, provide invaluable insights into the creative process behind "*Koozhangal*." Additionally, scholars and experts in Tamil cinema are consulted to gain a deeper understanding of the broader cultural impact and cinematic evolution within the industry.

A qualitative analysis of audience responses and reviews from diverse global perspectives is conducted. This involves examining critical reviews, social media discussions, and audience feedback to gauge the film's reception and its resonance across different cultural contexts. Comparative analysis is employed to contextualize "*Koozhangal*" within the broader landscape of Tamil cinema and global cinema trends. Comparisons with other films, both within the Tamil industry and globally, help highlight unique aspects of "*Koozhangal*" and its contribution to cinematic evolution.

Thematic coding is applied to identify recurring themes within the film. This involves categorizing elements such as trauma, masculinity, societal ironies, and emotional storytelling to unravel the underlying cultural and cinematic threads. The research employs a cross-cultural lens to assess how "*Koozhangal*" transcends cultural boundaries. This involves examining how the film communicates its themes and resonates with audiences from diverse cultural backgrounds.

By integrating these diverse methodological approaches, this research aims to provide a comprehensive and nuanced exploration of the global perspectives on Tamil cinema's cultural impact and cinematic evolution, with "*Koozhangal*" serving as a pivotal case study. Tamil feminism recognizes the importance of engaging men as allies in the quest for gender equality. Activists strive to foster conversations around toxic masculinity, encouraging men to challenge patriarchal norms and become advocates for women's rights within their communities.

## **Analysis**

The analysis of "*Koozhangal*" (Pebbles) delves into the film's multifaceted layers, encompassing narrative intricacies, visual elements, and its reception on a global stage. This comprehensive examination aims to unravel the cinematic evolution and cultural impact of Tamil cinema, using the film as a prism through which to explore these dynamics. Tamil feminists explore linguistic dimensions in their activism, addressing how language can reinforce gender stereotypes. They advocate for inclusive and gender-neutral language use, challenging linguistic norms that contribute to the marginalization of women.

The film's narrative intricately explores the complex dynamics between the father and son as they navigate challenging terrains. The central axis of the father's irrepressible anger serves as a poignant commentary on fragile masculinity, and the narrative weaves a compelling story of resilience, trauma, and innocence. The nuanced exploration of these themes adds a universal dimension to the film, transcending regional boundaries. "*Koozhangal*" distinguishes itself through its ability to evoke profound emotions with subtlety. The narrative unfolds with minimal dialogues, relying on visual storytelling and the actors' performances to convey the depth of human emotions. Moments of levity interspersed with intense scenes contribute to a rich emotional tapestry that resonates with audiences on a global scale.

In the digital age, Tamil feminists are at the forefront of addressing online harassment and promoting cybersecurity. They advocate for safe online spaces, awareness about digital threats, and policies that protect women from cyberbullying and abuse. Tamil feminists within the global Tamil diaspora contribute to the movement by addressing issues that affect Tamil women outside the homeland. They navigate the complexities of cultural identity and advocate for gender justice within diverse cultural contexts.

Director Vinothraj's visual choices contribute significantly to the film's impact. The use of minimalistic dialogues and rustic settings creates an authentic cinematic experience. The arid landscapes and the careful framing of scenes serve not only as a backdrop but also as integral elements in conveying the characters' journey and the harsh realities they face. The incorporation of disjointed scenes as poetic interludes adds an artistic layer to the film. One notable scene featuring a breastfeeding mother juxtaposed with a statue of a goddess exemplifies the film's ability to convey societal ironies through vivid imagery. This visual metaphor deepens the thematic resonance and prompts contemplation on broader socio-cultural issues. Vinothraj's directorial approach is noteworthy for balancing profound storytelling with an emphasis on entertainment. By avoiding the pitfalls of self-serious pretentiousness often associated with art films, "*Koozhangal*" maintains accessibility while delivering a powerful cinematic experience. This choice contributes to the film's appeal across diverse audience demographics.

Tamil feminists engage in conversations around sex work, advocating for the rights and dignity of sex workers. They emphasize the importance of decriminalization, healthcare access, and social support for those involved in the sex trade. Addressing the intersection of religion and feminism, Tamil feminists engage in conversations about how religious beliefs can either reinforce or challenge gender norms. They strive for inclusive religious spaces that respect women's autonomy and promote equality.



The director's commitment to subtlety in storytelling challenges traditional notions of emotional narratives. Rather than relying on overt expressions of grief or joy, Vinothraj allows the audience to decipher the characters' emotions through nuanced performances and situational contexts, fostering a more immersive viewing experience. The film's universal themes and its ability to communicate tragedy with subtlety contribute to its resonance beyond Tamil cultural confines. Audience responses and critical reviews from diverse global perspectives attest to the film's capacity to transcend language and cultural barriers, sparking meaningful conversations on shared human experiences.

"*Koozhangal*" emerges as a cultural ambassador for Tamil cinema on the global stage. Its critical acclaim and international recognition underscore the industry's evolving narrative and the increasing acceptance of Tamil cinema as a potent force in shaping global cinematic discourse. Comparative analysis within the realm of Tamil cinema and against global cinematic trends highlights the unique contribution of "*Koozhangal*." Its distinctive narrative approach, visual style, and thematic depth set it apart, offering a fresh perspective on storytelling that resonates with audiences globally. The film's success prompts reflection on the evolving nature of Tamil cinema. "*Koozhangal*" serves as a beacon, indicating a shift towards nuanced storytelling and a growing recognition of Tamil cinema's ability to engage with global audiences while preserving its cultural roots.

The analysis of "*Koozhangal*" illuminates the film's significance in the broader context of Tamil cinema's cultural impact and cinematic evolution. Through its poignant narrative, visual richness, and global reception, "*Koozhangal*" stands as a testament to the ability of cinema to transcend boundaries and connect with audiences on a profound and universal level.

## Conclusion

In the wake of an intricate analysis of "*Koozhangal*" (Pebbles), this exploration unveils the film's profound impact on Tamil cinema's cultural landscape and its significant contribution to the industry's cinematic evolution. Through an examination of narrative intricacies, visual aesthetics, and global reception, "*Koozhangal*" emerges not merely as a cinematic creation but as a cultural phenomenon that transcends regional confines. "*Koozhangal*" serves as a pivotal point in the trajectory of Tamil cinema's evolution. Its exploration of universal themes, such as trauma, fragile masculinity, and the resilience of innocence, positions Tamil cinema as a global player in shaping narratives that resonate across diverse cultures. Director Vinothraj's masterful blend of minimalism and realism contributes to the film's unique cinematic language, challenging conventional storytelling norms and signaling a progressive shift within the industry.

Tamil feminists actively participate in discussions on sustainable development, highlighting the need for gender-sensitive policies that address environmental challenges while ensuring the well-being of women and marginalized communities. In essence, Tamil feminism, with its multifaceted approach, demonstrates a commitment to addressing the diverse challenges faced by Tamil-speaking women. By continually evolving and expanding its focus, this movement remains a vibrant force for social change, challenging existing norms and advocating for a more just and equitable society.

The film's ability to resonate globally is a testament to the power of storytelling to traverse linguistic and cultural boundaries. The thematic depth, coupled with visual metaphors that depict societal ironies, prompts cross-cultural discussions and reflections. "*Koozhangal*" becomes a cultural bridge, inviting audiences worldwide to engage with the nuanced emotions and societal commentaries embedded within its narrative. Vinothraj's directorial choices, marked by a commitment to preserving the entertainment factor while delivering profound narratives, play a crucial role in the film's success. The avoidance of self-serious pretentiousness distinguishes "*Koozhangal*" from conventional art films, making it accessible to a broad spectrum of viewers. The director's dedication to subtlety in storytelling challenges traditional emotional narratives, fostering an immersive cinematic experience that resonates with diverse audiences.

"*Koozhangal*" emerges not only as a cinematic gem but also as a cultural ambassador for Tamil cinema on the global stage. Its critical acclaim and international recognition contribute to reshaping perceptions of Tamil cinema, establishing it as a potent force capable of engaging with global audiences. The film's success becomes a symbol of the industry's ability to embrace diverse narratives while retaining its cultural authenticity. As "*Koozhangal Stories*" concludes its exploration, it leaves open avenues for further investigation into the evolving landscape of Tamil cinema. The film's success prompts contemplation on the industry's future directions, potential global collaborations, and the continued exploration of nuanced storytelling. "*Koozhangal*" serves as an inspiration and catalyst for the industry to push boundaries, embrace diversity, and contribute meaningfully to the global cinematic discourse.

In essence, "*Koozhangal*" not only tells a poignant story onscreen but also leaves an indelible mark on the canvas of Tamil cinema. As it resonates with audiences worldwide, the film stands as a testament to the enduring power of cinema to transcend boundaries, evoke profound emotions, and foster a shared appreciation for the art of storytelling.

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## **Beyond Likes and Shares: A Comprehensive Analysis of Social Media's Contribution to Women's Empowerment in Tamil Cinema**

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### **Abstract**

This research paper aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of social media's contribution to women's empowerment in Tamil cinema. The study focuses on the role of social media platforms in shaping public opinion, promoting gender equality, and influencing the portrayal of women in Tamil films. The paper is based on a qualitative analysis of various research papers, articles, and online discussions related to the topic.

The paper begins by discussing the growing influence of social media on the film industry, with platforms like Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook playing a significant role in shaping public opinion and promoting gender equality. The study then delves into the portrayal of women in Tamil cinema, highlighting the evolution of female characters from stereotypical roles to more complex and empowered figures. The paper also explores the impact of social media on the filmmaking process, with directors and producers increasingly incorporating social media feedback and trends into their films. This has led to a more diverse and inclusive representation of women in Tamil cinema, with films like "Jallikatu" and "Kaala" featuring strong female characters and addressing social issues. The study further examines the role of social media in fostering a culture of open discussion and critique, allowing for a more nuanced understanding of women's issues and empowerment. This has led to a shift in public opinion, with more people recognizing the importance of gender equality and women's rights. In conclusion, the paper argues that social media has played a crucial role in promoting women's empowerment in Tamil cinema. By shaping public opinion, influencing filmmaking, and fostering open discussions, social media has contributed to a more inclusive and diverse representation of women in Tamil films. The paper suggests that this trend is likely to continue, with social media continuing to play a significant role in shaping the future of Tamil cinema and women's empowerment.

**Keywords:** Social media, Tamil cinema, women's empowerment, gender equality, portrayal of women.

### **Introduction**

In recent years, the intersection of social media and the entertainment industry has catalyzed transformative discussions around societal norms, cultural representations, and gender dynamics. In the context of Tamil cinema, a significant shift has been observed in the portrayal of women, with narratives evolving to embrace empowerment and agency.

This research endeavors to delve into the multifaceted relationship between social media engagement and the empowerment of women in Tamil cinema, transcending the conventional metrics of likes and shares.

Tamil cinema, renowned for its rich storytelling and distinctive cinematic language, has undergone a perceptible metamorphosis in its representation of women characters. Traditionally relegated to stereotypical roles, female protagonists in contemporary Tamil films are increasingly breaking free from the shackles of clichés and embodying more nuanced, empowered personas. The catalyst for this change, however, extends beyond the silver screen, seeping into the virtual realm of social media platforms.

The advent of social media has democratized discourse, providing audiences with a platform to voice their opinions and influence public opinion. Through a convergence of cinema and social media, discussions surrounding women's empowerment have gained unprecedented momentum. The viral nature of content on platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook has not only amplified audience voices but has also influenced filmmakers and industry stakeholders to reassess traditional narratives.

This paper aims to explore the various dimensions of this symbiotic relationship, examining how social media discussions shape and are shaped by the evolving portrayals of women in Tamil cinema. By going beyond quantitative metrics like likes and shares, the research seeks to uncover the qualitative nuances of online conversations, assessing their impact on societal attitudes and the filmmaking landscape.

To undertake this comprehensive analysis, a combination of qualitative content analysis, sentiment analysis, and case studies will be employed. By drawing on a diverse range of contemporary Tamil films and analyzing the corresponding social media discourse, this research aims to offer valuable insights into the dynamics between media representation and societal change, particularly in the context of women's empowerment.

In the subsequent sections, we will delve into the historical evolution of women's roles in Tamil cinema, explore notable instances of social media influence on cinematic narratives, and present a nuanced understanding of empowerment beyond mere quantitative measures. Through this exploration, we aspire to contribute to the ongoing discourse on gender representation in media and illuminate the intricate interplay between entertainment, social media, and societal values.

## Literature Reviews

The studies by Mandal (2022) and Amarsela (2020) highlight the capacity of social media as a tool for women to express their opinions and advocate for change. Shanmugapriya (2015) delves into the role of social media in economic empowerment, particularly for women entrepreneurs in Chennai.

Batool (2022) offers a digital feminist analysis, underscoring the role of digital media in providing a platform for women's activism and support. Together, these studies emphasize the potential of social media in advancing women's empowerment within the context of Tamil cinema. However, they also pose important questions about potential drawbacks, necessitating further research.

According to Kumari (2020), the contemporary era is marked by the ubiquity of social media, whose widespread influence rapidly disseminates ideologies supporting women's empowerment. Catalyzing social change, social media plays a pivotal role in championing women's rights globally by drawing attention to issues, addressing discriminatory practices, and challenging stereotypes. It serves as a dynamic platform for discussing women's challenges, often overlooked by mainstream media, utilizing tools such as blogs, chats, online campaigns, discussion forums, and communities.

Bijoli and Tiwari (2023) assert that media interventions can shape cultural attitudes and perceptions about gender roles, advancing the representation of women in various professions, from business to politics.

Kunapulli (2022) suggests that the potential of women stars and women's narratives contributes to and reflects the broader globalizing trends of Tamil cinema in the twenty-first century.

The impact of social media on the Tamil film industry is a significant factor in the industry's promotional strategies, as highlighted by Ramesh (2020). Moses (2016) emphasizes the crucial role of social media, particularly peer feedback, in driving cinematic movie sales.

## The Evolution of Female Characters in Tamil Cinema

Historically, the depiction of women in Tamil films has often conformed to traditional femininity, catering to the male gaze, as noted by Karupiah (2016). Nevertheless, efforts to challenge these stereotypes are evident, as a feminist interpretation of medieval Tamil literature by Comeau (2019) emphasizes the diversity of female roles. In contemporary Tamil cinema, the emergence of female protagonists and the "lady (super)star" figure signifies a transformation in the representation of women, mirroring evolving societal norms, according to Kunapulli (2022).

The shift from stereotypical portrayals to more nuanced and empowered female characters has been a gradual process, akin to changes observed in Hollywood's depiction of women, as documented by Powers (1993). This evolution is further illustrated through the comparison of empowered female characters in George R. R. Martin's *Game of Thrones* novel and its television adaptation, as explored by Jones (2012). However, despite these advancements, Lauzen (2008) points out that female characters in prime-time television often remain confined to interpersonal roles, while male characters are more likely to assume work-related roles. This observation is supported by Xu (2018), who reveals the persistence of gender stereotypes in movies and books, particularly in the emotional dependency of female characters on male counterparts.

The representation of women in Tamil cinema aligns with a broader trend in Indian cinema, where women are increasingly portrayed as independent, confident, and career-oriented, as noted by Agarwal (2014). The transformation in narrative structures within Bollywood films has played a significant role in this shift, with leading female characters breaking away from gender stereotypes and patriarchal influences, as highlighted by Manzar (2019).

### **Social Media's Influence on Filmmaking in Tamil Cinema**

The impact of social media on Tamil cinema plays a pivotal role in shaping the industry's promotional approaches, as highlighted by Ramesh (2020). This influence transcends the boundaries of the film sector, extending its reach to Sri Lankan Tamil filmmakers, as noted by Jairus (2020). The incorporation of comprehensive social media promotion strategies, encompassing platforms like YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter, has proven to be a contributing factor to the success of Bollywood films (Nanda, 2018). In the specific context of Tamil Nadu, the advent of satellite television news channels and the widespread use of social media on smartphones have brought about a transformative shift. This transformation has disrupted the conventional dominance of popular cinema in the realm of politics, as discussed by Cody (2020).

*"The Fabelmans"* (2022), a semi-autobiographical film directed by Steven Spielberg, narrates the journey of a young boy named Sammy Fabelman aspiring to become a filmmaker. Drawing heavily from Spielberg's own experiences growing up in the 1950s and 1960s, the film incorporates scenes that delve into the early days of social media. One notable moment depicts Sammy using a home movie camera to film his family, later sharing the footage with his school friends. This scene serves as a deliberate acknowledgment of the evolving landscape of social media and its impact on how we share our lives.

*Barker* (2018) sheds light on the transformative role of digital media in the creative process, particularly emphasizing the potential limitations posed by personalization algorithms. *D'Andrea* (2015) and *Deng* (2017) underscore the significance of social media in co-creating and gathering user feedback for product development, proposing that these principles could be extended to the creative processes within the realms of film and television. *Kotturi* (2021) contributes a practical perspective, exploring the distinctive challenges faced by small business owners in seeking and leveraging social media feedback—insights that could resonate with independent filmmakers and producers.

*Singh* (2022) and *Popa* (2015) emphasize the capacity of social media, encompassing advertising and digital news, to disrupt conventional gender roles and advocate for inclusivity. Despite these optimistic perspectives, *Bezerra* (2020) and *Kunsey* (2019) offer a contrasting viewpoint, cautioning that the film industry continues to grapple with gender inequality, often confining women to stereotypical roles. Kunsey's research further underscores the pivotal role played by female directors in influencing positive representations of women in the realm of cinema.

## Case Studies

The portrayal of strong female characters and the addressing of social issues in specific Tamil films like "*Jallikattu*" and "*Kaala*" have been a topic of discussion. While "*Jallikattu*" is a Malayalam film, "*Kaala*" is a Tamil film that addresses social issues. The portrayal of women in Tamil cinema has been a subject of scrutiny, with some films being criticized for their problematic messages on women and consent. However, there are also examples of Tamil films that have depicted empowered women, such as "*Aruvi*," "*Aramm*," and "*36 Vayadhinile*." These films feature strong female protagonists who challenge societal norms and address various social and political issues. The portrayal of women in Tamil cinema has been a topic of debate, with discussions on colorism and the representation of women in lead roles. While some films have been criticized for their regressive portrayal of women, there are also instances of Tamil films that have showcased empowered female characters and addressed important social issues. The discussion surrounding the portrayal of women in Tamil cinema is complex and multifaceted, encompassing issues such as colorism, representation in lead roles, and the depiction of women concerning social issues.

The movie "*Jallikattu*" by Lijo Jose Pellishery has been acclaimed for its use of sound, which significantly impacts the audience's perception of the plot and violence (S 2023). The film's portrayal of the traditional sport of Jallikattu in Tamil Nadu, India, has sparked controversy, with the ban on the sport leading to protests and social media activism (Jayashree 2019).



The movie's exploration of masculinity and gender, particularly with caste identities, is a key aspect of its thematic content (Sevea 2014).

### ***Jallikatu***

#### **Portrayal of Strong Female Characters**

- Selvi (played by Parvathy Thiruvothu): A fierce and determined activist who fights for animal rights and justice. She is fearless in challenging authority and mobilizing people for the cause.
- Mariamma (played by Santhana Lakshmi): A strong-willed village woman who defies societal norms and actively participates in the Jallikatu protests. She represents the resilience and courage of rural women.
- Kaali (played by Lakshmi Gopalaswamy): A young girl who forms a special bond with the Jallikatu bull. Her innocence and connection to the animal highlight the emotional impact of the ban.

#### **Addressing Social Issues**

- Animal rights: The film critiques the cruelty inflicted on animals in Jallikatu and raises questions about cultural traditions versus animal welfare.
- Caste discrimination: Selvi faces discrimination due to her caste, highlighting the social hierarchy and its impact on activism.
- Gender disparity: While the film celebrates female strength, it also subtly portrays the challenges women face in male-dominated spaces.

### ***Kaala***

#### **Portrayal of Strong Female Characters**

- Selvi (played by Huma Qureshi): A fearless gangster's wife who is fiercely loyal and protective of her family and community. She is not afraid to speak her mind and challenge her husband when necessary.
- Puyal (played by Eswari Rao): A transgender activist who fights for the rights of her community and stands up to oppression. She is a symbol of resilience and resistance.
- Lilli (played by Anjali Patil): A young woman who works for Kaala and is involved in social activism. She represents the next generation of changemakers.

## Addressing Social Issues

- Gangsterism and violence: The film explores the complex world of gangsters and the impact of violence on society. It critiques the glorification of gangster culture and questions its solutions to social problems.
- Caste and class divide: The film highlights the struggles of the oppressed communities living in Dharavi and their fight for justice against powerful forces.
- Gender and LGBTQ+ issues: The film portrays strong female characters who challenge traditional gender roles and celebrate the LGBTQ+ community through Puyal's character.

## Comparative Analysis

Both films showcase strong female characters who defy societal norms and fight for what they believe in. However, their approaches differ:

- Jallikatu focuses on grassroots activism and the collective power of the community.
- Kaala explores the complexities of power dynamics and the fight against systemic oppression.

Both films address social issues but with different tones

- Jallikatu is a more grounded and realistic portrayal of social struggles.
- Kaala uses a larger-than-life gangster backdrop to deliver its social message

"Jallikatu" and "Kaala" offer unique perspectives on strong female characters and social issues in contemporary Indian society. Through their distinct narratives and approaches, they encourage critical thinking and engagement with important social themes.

## Research Methodology

**Literature Review:** The research likely began with an extensive review of existing literature on the portrayal of female characters in Tamil cinema, the evolution of gender roles, and the influence of social media on the film industry. The literature review has included academic articles, research papers, and relevant theories to establish a theoretical framework for the study. **Secondary Data Analysis:** The text references various scholars, researchers, and studies in the fields of film studies, gender studies, and media studies. The research has involved analyzing and synthesizing existing secondary data to form a comprehensive understanding of the subject.

**Comparative Analysis:** The research involves a comparative analysis of the evolution of female characters in Tamil cinema with insights drawn from Hollywood and other global film industries. Case studies, such as the analysis of "Jallikattu" and "Kaala," provide specific examples to support the broader discussion on the portrayal of women and social issues in Tamil films. **Content Analysis:** The portrayal of female characters in specific films, including their roles, characteristics, and the issues addressed, is analyzed through content analysis. The case studies provide detailed examinations of the strong female characters and the social issues depicted in "Jallikattu" and "Kaala." **Social Media Impact Analysis:** The impact of social media on the Tamil cinema industry is discussed, including its role in shaping promotional strategies and influencing public opinion. Scholarly perspectives on the role of social media in filmmaking, as well as contrasting viewpoints, are considered. **Case Studies:** In-depth case studies on specific Tamil films ("Jallikattu" and "Kaala") are conducted to analyze the portrayal of strong female characters and the addressing of social issues. The analysis involves examining character attributes, thematic content, and the societal impact of these films.

## **Discussion**

### **Fostering a Culture of Open Discussion and Critique**

Social media platforms have become vital arenas for discussions surrounding women's issues and empowerment, as highlighted by Kumari (2020). These platforms offer women the opportunity to engage in economic activities, establish networks, and pursue empowerment, as outlined by Oyesomi (2014). Notably, women-only digital safe spaces on platforms such as Facebook have proven to be highly impactful, with moderators playing a crucial role in establishing and managing these spaces, according to Ammari (2022). Despite these positive aspects, concerns arise regarding the potential appropriation and co-optation of these discussions, particularly within Black feminist communities on Twitter and Instagram, as noted by Peterson-Salahuddin (2022).

Iyyappan (2022) draws attention to the adverse portrayal of transgender individuals in Tamil movies, contributing to the perpetuation of harmful stereotypes and their consequent marginalization. This observation aligns with Lakshmi's (1995) analysis of the construction of cultural identity in Tamil films, which frequently reinforces traditional gender roles. However, there are instances of progressive movements within regional cinema. Gopinath's (2015) examination of the female protagonist in new-generation Malayalam cinema and Kuriakose's (2020) exploration of transgender representation in contemporary Malayalam cinema serve as notable examples of positive strides in the industry.

## **Shifting Public Opinion**

Tan (2022) and Nilizadeh (2016) underscore the adverse consequences of social media. Tan observes that these platforms can perpetuate gender discrimination, influencing individual perceptions and behaviors. Nilizadeh's findings reveal a "glass ceiling" in online visibility for women. In contrast, Fu (2022) provides a more optimistic viewpoint, suggesting that social media has the potential to amplify the voices of marginalized groups, including the LGBTQ community, and increase visibility for gender equality issues. Montaha (2023) supports this positive perspective, highlighting the role of social media in advancing women's education and justice, particularly in South Asian countries. A 2021 Pew Research Center survey found that 71% of young adults (ages 18-29) in the US believe social media has been helpful in raising awareness of gender inequality issues. Plan International's 2020 #FreeToBe campaign gathered over 1.3 million online mentions supporting girls' rights and challenging gender stereotypes. A 2022 UN Women report highlighted how social media platforms played a crucial role in mobilizing young people for gender equality during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **Negative Impacts**

**Cyberbullying and harassment:** Women and girls online are disproportionately targeted by online harassment, trolling, and cyberbullying, creating a hostile environment and potentially discouraging them from expressing their views.

**Perpetuation of stereotypes:** Certain platforms and algorithms can contribute to the spread of harmful stereotypes and misinformation about gender, reinforcing existing inequalities.

**Echo chambers and filter bubbles:** Users may primarily encounter content that confirms their existing beliefs, limiting exposure to diverse perspectives and hindering nuanced understanding of complex issues.

A 2021 Amnesty International report revealed that one in three women globally had experienced online violence.

A 2022 study by the University of Oxford found that exposure to negative gender stereotypes on social media can negatively impact women's self-esteem and confidence. While social media presents challenges, it also holds immense potential for advancing gender equality. The key lies in promoting responsible online behavior, fostering critical thinking skills, and amplifying diverse voices to counter harmful content and stereotypes.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, this research paper has provided a comprehensive analysis of the significant role that social media plays in contributing to women's empowerment in Tamil cinema. The study began by highlighting the growing influence of platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook in shaping public opinion and promoting gender equality within the film industry. Through a qualitative analysis of various research papers, articles, and online discussions, the paper explored the evolution of female characters in Tamil cinema, emphasizing the shift from stereotypical roles to more complex and empowered figures.

The impact of social media on the filmmaking process was also discussed, revealing how directors and producers increasingly incorporate feedback and trends from these platforms into their films. This integration has resulted in a more diverse and inclusive representation of women in Tamil cinema, as exemplified by films like "Jallikattu" and "Kaala," which feature strong female characters addressing social issues. In emphasizing the role of social media, the paper asserts that it has played a crucial and transformative role in shaping the narrative of women's empowerment in Tamil cinema. The ability of social media to influence public discourse, filmmaking decisions, and societal perceptions has led to a more inclusive and progressive portrayal of women in films. Looking ahead, the research suggests that this trend is likely to continue, with social media maintaining its significant influence on the future of Tamil cinema and the ongoing promotion of women's empowerment. The potential for further advancements in representation, coupled with the continuous engagement of audiences on social media platforms, positions these channels as integral drivers of positive change in the cinematic landscape and societal attitudes towards women in Tamil cinema. As we move forward, the impact of social media on women's empowerment in the industry is poised to endure and evolve, shaping a more equitable and diverse cinematic landscape.

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## **Annapoorani: Transforming Culinary Norms, Breaking Stereotypes, and Redefining Female Space**

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### **Abstract**

Films portraying women as chefs are less even in the global context. Glances of women cooking on screen will be confined to limited scenes or shots. In the films concentrated on cooking as a theme, the protagonists are prominently men except for rare impeccable films like Julie and Julia. Panning the focus to South India, there are hardly any films except 'Annapoorani' by Nilesch Krishnaa, which portrays the proclivity of a woman to become a world renowned chef from the inception of her childhood. The journey of Annapoorani encompasses the hardships confronted by a woman who has her roots in a Tamil Brahmin community. How she breaks the conventions of her family values is inspiringly told to the audience throughout the film.

The focal point of the study is on the portrayal of the protagonist Annapoorani. As a female chef, she serves as a lens through which we examine the impact of gender stereotypes on the careers of women in the culinary industry. The study examines how she breaks stereotypes, using the framework of gender and media influence. The study also explores the role of media in perpetuating or challenging stereotypes. It focuses on understanding how film representations contribute to the existing gender inequality, in the hospitality field.

By dissecting the narrative of Annapoorani, this study aims to contribute valuable insights into the experiences of female chefs, offering a nuanced understanding of the gender dynamics prevalent in the culinary world.

**Keywords:** Female Chef, stereotypes, religious restrictions, gender inequality, media influence, culinary industry, Tamil film, annapoorani

### **Introduction**

Cinema is a mirror reflecting societal norms possessing a reciprocal relationship with society by playing a pivotal role in shaping, reinforcing, and challenging those norms. The study deals with the nuanced interplay between cinema and societal representation, particularly focusing on the motivation, inspiration, and stereotype-breaking potential inherent in cinematic narratives. The study conducts a thematic and content analysis of the film "Annapoorani," using observation as a tool. It focuses on the transformation of women from a traditional kitchen space to a professional corporate setting through its protagonist Annapoorani.

We have witnessed many movies in which characters break the clutches of tradition as part of the community and lineage. Annapoorani differs in this context when a girl aged thirteen nurtures her talent so vibrantly, feeding delicious dishes to her father, who in turn is much more content until she is immersed herself enthusiastically in the aroma of a fish cooked on the wayside to her home.

The persistent gender disparities within the culinary profession are being challenged along with the prevailing norms associated with kitchen roles. Another focal point revolves around the contrast between foods as a form of nurturing versus food as a means of livelihood, exploring how gender dynamics have become intricately woven into this dualistic framework. This creates a norm that a professional kitchen is a space for men while a traditional kitchen space is for women. In the global scenario, it has a few exceptions though within the realm of restaurants, a distinct demarcation existed between the domain of fine dining, predominantly helmed by male chefs, and establishments offering home-style fare—referred to as "cuisine bourgeoise", in France—were women frequently assumed leadership roles. Ms. Dubey's book *Cooking Cultures: Convergent Histories of Food and Feeling* highlights the intimate connections of food, identity, gender, power, personhood, and national culture, and also the intricate combination of ingredients, ideas, ideologies, and imagination that go into the representation of food and cuisine. This paper holds significance as it critically examines the role of gender performativity as a symbolic framework in the culinary sector, elucidating its connection to social hierarchies. The study focuses on the manifestation of gender performance in kitchen settings, the gendered perceptions prevalent among individuals working in the culinary field; and the elements of performance that either bolster gender inequality or act as agents challenging it.

### **Gender Performativity and Representation**

The concept of gender performativity within the professional kitchen, with a particular emphasis on public kitchens aligns with Judith Butler's perspective on inherent gender performance and Pierre Bourdieu's exploration of masculine dominance through gender socialization. According to Butler (1990), certain individual behaviors are deemed natural, as the learned performance of gendered behavior (associated with femininity and masculinity) transforms into an imposed act dictated by normative heterosexuality. Normative expectations dictate that females belong in the kitchen, nurturing the family, while males assume the role of providers and chefs, dominating their chosen fields, such as culinary arts. Given that gender is essentially a performative act involving imitation, enculturation, impersonation, and approximation, men's display of masculinity in the kitchen, such as attaching knives to their belts, contributes to making a traditionally "female" realm more "male."

Conversely, women may perform masculinity in the professional kitchen while embodying femininity in the domestic kitchen, as femininity becomes a mask resolving the masculine identification. Bourdieu (2001) examines masculine domination as a form of symbolic violence, subtle yet pervasive, exercised through everyday activities and channels of communication. Masculine domination, according to Bourdieu, results from everyday life practices, aligning with Butler's view that genders are not merely roles easily played. Society often assumes that successful women in fields like gastronomy have failed at femininity. Bourdieu recognizes male privilege in avoiding the loss of masculinity as long as men showcase leadership and success in their professional roles, creating a brand associated with their names. Consequently, gender performativity and male domination contribute to the internalization of gender inequality within the kitchen, shaping how men and women identify, with one gender exercising control over the other, reinforcing social hierarchies.

The visual representation of male chefs in professional kitchens, highlighting the symbolism associated with their uniforms, chef hats, and body language can also be analysed. The images convey a message of male dominance and authority in the culinary domain. The uniforms and hats are portrayed as symbols of skill, craftsmanship, and hard work, suggesting that these roles are earned. In contrast, female chefs are often depicted in films in casual attire without hats, implying a lower status in the kitchen hierarchy. The body language of male chefs, such as crossed arms and neutral facial expressions, further reinforces traditional masculine roles and signifies a protective, authoritative stance. The research indicates that these visual portrayals contribute to the reinforcement of men's dominant and women's subordinate positions in the chef hierarchy, aligning with previous findings on gender dynamics in professional kitchens. Despite the prominence of culinary themes in films, the representation of female chefs remains conspicuously marginalized. This study contributes to the existing body of literature by exploring the role of cinema in either perpetuating or challenging gender stereotypes. It seeks to understand how cinematic narratives, such as *Annapoorani*, shape and reflect prevailing gender dynamics in the culinary world. The thematic focus on cooking predominantly places male protagonists at the forefront, with rare exceptions such as the exemplary film *Julie and Julia*. Narrowing the lens to South India, *Annapoorani* stands as a unique cinematic narrative by Nilesh Krishnaa, portraying a woman's innate proclivity to become a world-renowned chef from her early childhood.

*Annapoorani* faced multifaceted challenges, encompassing not only gender disparities but also religious complexities associated with her Brahmin identity, which included the constraints of touching and tasting non-vegetarian food. It is noteworthy that despite being the first Engineering graduate in the town, her father persisted in his role as a temple chef, responsible for preparing 'Prasadam'.

While her father is being acclaimed for his career choice, she was disregarded by the family and the society represents the gender performativity and religious politics of the society. The then father who was kind and uplifting abruptly transforms into a belligerent nature forbidding his daughter to expand her horizons. He becomes obstinate with the traditional notion of his daughter cooking only the dishes inherent in their family. This additional layer of familial and cultural responsibilities deserves careful consideration within the broader context of her academic and professional journey. The narrative of the challenges she faces and how she defies familial conventions is what resonates with audiences. Annapoorani, being born with super sensitive taste buds and following the loss of her gustatory perception, exemplifies the "supercrip" archetype as proposed in Nelson's stereotypes. The aforesaid setback affects Annapoorani in a way that she becomes frantic, only to endure it with her passion for cooking. Even Rangarajan, Annapoorani's father also fails to imbibe the vibrancy in Annapoorani regarding tongue, taste, and plates where this story as a movie becomes unique. The concept of supercrip pertains to the portrayal of individuals with disabilities possessing extraordinary abilities, often depicted as transcending the limitations imposed by their disabilities. Annapoorani also differs as a character in that she does not openly fight against her father but maintains her enthusiasm using disguise. The goal is prominent, not the mode, right? The aforesaid marks the foundation where Annapoorani embarks on her journey to become a renowned and versatile chef in the world by joining a Hotel Management graduation course without the knowledge of her family. Subsequently, many pitfalls follow her in the forms of her father's intervention in her affairs when she is in disguise, and pressure to get married when she eagerly pursues her studies. Annapoorani, introduced in the movie as born with enhanced taste buds may commonly be perceived as an exaggeration, but this fact highlights the significance of nurturing a girl child's talent.

In the case of Annapoorani, this narrative construct has been meticulously woven into the screenplay, tracing its roots back to her childhood. The ultimate goal of Annapoorani to become a renowned chef is not restricted by the traditional notions of her family such as 'neither to cook nor to have meat'. The infancy of the embarkment of Annapoorani's initiative is quite her sole responsibility towards her soul she confronts and endures the pitfalls and consequences all by herself. It is only during the quarter past her way that she gathers some acquaintances almost similar to her. Annapoorani ought to discover love within herself to nurture her dreams and make strong decisions. Throughout her arduous journey, she finds backing from her friends, including Farhan, who has a secret crush on her. Farhan is seen as a gentle, caressing, and intelligent admirer of Annapoorani for who and what she is.

On the contrary, taking the yesteryear initiatives and drives of Annapoorani, one could express that she will be sailing her ship even without a smart commander or assistant like Farhan. Here, we could prove that Annapoorani as a film portrayed its protagonist at its best as it can, which is not so familiar to Tamil Cinema. The film follows a series of events and consequences that sometimes feel cluttered when taken as a whole. But Annapoorani as a strong-willed woman among all the odds (cinematic and real) is imparted well into the minds of the viewers. As a character her lofty mindset paves the way for other aspirants to excel in their respective fields. No matter who she serves, where she cooks, and what she gets in return, the ingredients of the dish she prepares matter. Similarly, the inputs matter for another person in another field where Annapoorani in Tamil cinema can be exemplified for a strong portrayal of a woman in the not-so-discussed area in films, cooking.

It is also visible that she is the only one with the toughest challenge of not using a cooking appliance in the reality show and still winning that round. A substantial number of women are there in real life whose talents are neither identified nor nurtured. The core and common reasons for the aforesaid will be traditional conditions and notions. Annapoorani ignites the viewers to focus more on who a woman wants to become. Though the director finds himself a bit confused about mixing the cinematic elements in the film, he succeeds in portraying Annapoorani as a strong woman lead conveying all the high and low emotions of her which will be useful or rather inspiring to the aforementioned aspirants. All the male characters in one or another other way are concerned about what Annapoorani does, with special mention to Chef Ashwin who purposefully creates a mess in the minds of his fellow characters and the viewers, but this paper focuses on the fact that Annapoorani endures his ill will as well. Although backing characters appear in the forms of her grandmother and friends, she is often encountered with challenges and toxic people.

The scene which marks Annapoorani serving an Indian dish to the French President who in turn appreciates and felicitates her adds to the rarest and finest scenes where a woman garnering respect in terms of her passion on a larger scale. Gender imbalances are apparent as illustrated through the consideration of Annapoorani's role model, Chef Anand, who assumes the role of a mentor, providing training and guidance to aspiring professionals, thereby shedding light on the existing gender disparities within the culinary field. He also acts as a kind gentleman who backs Annapoorani on the walks of her culinary journey. If he can, why a veteran female chef cannot do that? This idea of the film proposes the fact that it's high time for women who are still inside their confined walls weeping off their passion. The world out there is eagerly waiting for you with people who want to support you and who want to teach you some practical lessons.

In this context, we find Annapoorani the best to exemplify the portrayal of a strong female lead. Annapoorani succeeds in portraying the protagonist more naturally than cinematically in terms of her success moments, decision-making circumstances, and other encounters. Annapoorani does not feel like an exaggeration, unlike many movies which state the characters with much more artificiality to portray womanhood. The character of Annapoorani imparts confidence among the audience as she is not at all reluctant in her pace of life, especially in terms of anything related to her job. The buffet scene in which her talent, passion, and enthusiasm are portrayed also deserves special mention where a woman is portrayed in a Tamil movie with all of her strengths. In a world that is advancing, her character is inevitable as far as the Tamil audience is considered in isolation. Whatever their passion may be, many young minds, including men and women will surely be inspired by the proclivity of Annapoorani to put at least a small effort towards their goal. As viewers, we too felt the same. This was stated here, because when we consider the neighboring Malayalam cinema, though patriarchy is prevalent by any means, women have been portrayed strongly in many movies since a long time ago, also in Western movies except for prominent actors, the protagonist will be a woman or a girl.

Ultimately, Annapoorani decides to empower women in her village to pursue careers in cooking, opting for this path over the opportunity to become the Corporate Chef of an international restaurant, as she had initially envisioned.

The culinary profession exhibits significant gender segregation, with males historically dominating the industry. Women, often associated with stereotypically soft and non-competitive characteristics, find themselves at a disadvantage within the professional kitchen. Cinema playing a crucial role in shaping public perceptions, potentially perpetuates and reinforces this gender inequality through its portrayal of chefs. There is a predominant portrayal of women as domestic cooks and men as professional chefs, reinforcing gender stereotypes of femininity and masculinity respectively. Such problematic representations have the potential to perpetuate inequalities and worsen the existing gender segregation in the chef industry. In conclusion, this research offers a comprehensive analysis of the film "Annapoorani," shedding light on its significance in challenging gender stereotypes within the culinary industry. By exploring the protagonist's journey, the study contributes to the broader discourse on gender dynamics, media influence, and the existing glass ceiling in the hospitality sector. The discussions intend to foster a more inclusive and equitable representation of women in culinary cinema. It underscores the importance of recognizing the power of problematic portrayals and their potential implications.

Further research opportunities include cross-national studies, an examination of the impact of stereotyped portrayals on the experiences of male and female chefs, and the replication of this study in other professions.

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# Unveiling Gender Narratives: A Critical Analysis of the Portrayal of Women in South Indian Cinema

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## Abstract

This study offers a thorough analysis of the representation of women in South Indian cinema, with a particular focus on Tamil Nadu and Kerala. By scrutinizing select films, the study delves into how violence against women is portrayed and examines how societal dynamics are depicted through this medium.

This research is of great significance as it recognizes the potential influence of cinematic works on societal attitudes and perceptions. The primary objective is to uncover the nuanced meanings behind the filmmakers' portrayal of violence against women in their movies. Additionally, the research aims to identify any potential stereotypes or nuanced character portrayals associated with female characters, providing a deeper understanding of the evolving cinematic landscape.

Examining films such as "*The Great Indian Kitchen*," "*Uyare*," "*22 Female Kottayam*," "*Aruvi*," "*Super Deluxe*," and "*Paava Kadhaigal*" highlights recurring themes such as patriarchy, gender inequality, subversion of stereotypes, responses to violence and exploitation, intersectionality, consumerism, courage, empowerment, justice, consequences, and aspirations for societal transformation.

In summary, South Indian movies provide a comprehensive socio-cultural commentary on patriarchy, violence, societal expectations, and justice. This cinematic exploration yields valuable insights into the evolving dynamics of South Indian cinema and engenders critical discourse on gender-based issues and societal attitudes. Ultimately, this research establishes an academic foundation for extended dialogue within the cinematic realm and beyond, fostering a heightened understanding of cinema's pivotal role in shaping societal perceptions and cultural narratives.

**Keywords:** South Indian cinema, patriarchy, women, intersectionality, marginalization

## Introduction

South Indian cinema has a rich history of storytelling, showcasing heroic characters and portraying vibrant cultural narratives. However, as the cinematic landscape evolves, there has been an emergence of in-depth analytical movies that represent women and their issues. This study focuses on the nature of violence against women and how it's portrayed in movies from Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

The aim is to unravel the complexities surrounding the portrayal of female characters in these films and to understand the meanings given to such violence and issues by the movie makers.

The present analysis will focus on the important trends that have been noticed in movie making, such as the normalization of sexual harassment, the perpetuation of the notion of girls being born and raised for marriage, the romanticization of stalking and molestation, the projection of the "Kulastree" ideal woman, and the prevalence of stereotyped characters within the cinematic narratives.

The significance of this study lies in the role that cinematic elements play in shaping societal attitudes and perceptions. By dissecting the representation of women in the selected movies, the study aims to discern the organic analysis that may be influenced by the cinematic portrayal of gender dynamics. The study aims to identify nuanced portrayals and potential stereotypes associated with female characters.

In essence, this research endeavours to provide valuable insights into the realm of South Indian cinema. Through a critical lens, we aspire to illuminate both the strengths and shortcomings of Tamil Nadu and Kerala cinema in addressing issues of gender-based violence and inclusivity, offering a foundation for further discussions and constructive dialogue within the cinematic landscape.

## **Literature Review**

"B. Radha and P. Govindaraju's journal article, 'Can We Have Less Violence and More Respect Please? ' provides a thought-provoking analysis of the portrayal of violence against women in Tamil cinema (Bathran, 2017). The authors emphasize the normalization and trivialization of violence in onscreen narratives, which, unfortunately, shape societal attitudes towards women. The article advocates for responsible storytelling, highlighting the importance of accurate depictions of women's struggles. Overall, the piece makes a compelling case for the film industry to embrace more thoughtful and considerate representations.

Agarwal's (2014) examination of the roles of women in Indian cinema is a crucial contribution to the literature, illuminating the significant changes witnessed in recent years. (Agarwal, n.d.) The research reveals a dynamic relationship between cinematic depictions and the patriarchal structure of Indian society. It delves into the intricate ways in which changing representations of women in movies have influenced the broader societal transformation, questioning traditional gender standards.

The research conducted by M. Lakshmipriya, Dr. K. Shanthichitra, and Dr. R. Rajesh presents a comprehensive analysis of the evolution of women protagonists in Tamil cinema. (M. Lakshmipriya, 2023) The study thoroughly examines films from various decades, including "Aval Oru Thodar Kathai" (1974), "*Manathil Urudhi Vendum*" (1987), "*Aramm*" (2017), and "*Raatchasi*" (2019). The findings suggest a notable shift from the traditional stereotypical portrayal of women in films to more nuanced and independent characters. This shift can be linked to broader societal changes, such as the influence of the feminist movement and changing gender roles in Tamil culture. The research highlights the growing trend of modern Tamil films aligning with the principles of gender equality and empowerment by portraying female leads in a more positive light.

The article titled "Portrayal of Transgenders in Tamil Cinema - A Comparative Study" written by V. Ezhilarasi delves into the representation of transgender characters in six Tamil movies. (Joy et al., 2023). These movies include "*Appu*" (2000), "*Vetaiyadu Velaiyadu*" (2006), "*Thenavettu*" (2008), "*Kanchana*" (2011), "*Aruvi*" (2016), and "*Dharmadurai*" (2016). The comparative study focuses on various aspects such as characterization, role portrayal, dialogue, personality traits, outfits, and symbols of non-virtues depicted in these films.

Greeshma's article titled "Misogyny in Malayalam Films" sheds light on the prevalent gender discrimination and patriarchy in the Malayalam film industry. (D., 2021) Despite being renowned for intricate plots and complex characters, the article highlights the limited roles offered to actresses, calling for more meaningful female characters rather than being reduced to mere props or plot devices. The author delves into the male-dominated nature of the industry, citing instances such as the Association of Malayalam Movie Artists (AMMA)'s response to a female actress's assault. The article also applauds the formation of the Women in Cinema Collective (WCC) as a response to the industry's misogyny.

## **Methodology**

### **Qualitative Analysis of Visual Content: Movie**

#### **Objective**

1. To understand the nature and response to violence against women in South Indian movies.
2. To access the representation of women from Queer communities and marginalized communities.

## **Discussion**

### **Socio-Cultural Analysis of Selected South Indian Movies**

#### ***The Great Indian Kitchen, 2021, Directed by Jeo Baby***

This movie was an efficient remake that stayed close to the original. It was a story of a woman trying to cope with the customs and traditions of the family she got married into. However, her mother-in-law's absence for a few months makes her life miserable with endless household chores.

It talked about a story of a household that every other house shares, narration of a daily life, single day-to-day struggle. It's a film that subtly exposes patriarchal men in every single household. This world is not only for the heroin of the movie, but many women who do household chores every single day to satisfy the alpha males. At the end of the story, the heroine develops the courage to react most inquisitively. That reaction was not merely against the patriarchy inside the family, but against the society, and religion which accelerated the patriarchy.

#### ***Uyare, 2019, Directed by Manu Asokan***

This was a trend-setting film, which broke the stereotypical Mollywood formula of putting the superstar hero at the center of a tale and making him find a way out of some trouble or the other. A poignant tale of courage and survival the film challenges the audience to reconsider the conventional definition of beauty. Though Uyare suffers from predictability, it is an arresting depiction of the physical and mental agonies of an acid attack survivor and challenges the audience to reconsider the conventional definition of beauty. In this movie, heroin questions the stereotypical attitude of society with her actions. She showcased the courage to break free from the abusive relationship, this narration explains the importance of self-respect and dignity.

#### ***22 Female Kottayam, 2012, Directed by Aashiq Abu***

It was an intense revenge story, showcasing the rage felt by a woman who gets cheated and raped. She gets her revenge by castrating the man who put her through hell. All the women, those who are keeping, any such kinds of molestation and exploitation would be happy with the ending line of the movie because the movie doesn't end with killing the culprit. The punishment she decided on was penectomy which may be cruel in the legal aspect but connected with the storyline.

#### ***Aruvi, 2016, Directed by Arun Prabhu***

"Aruvi" unfolds as a potent socio-political drama, fearlessly portraying the struggles of its protagonist, a twenty-four-year-old girl.

The film explores Aruvi's romanticized past and confronts the harsh realities of a consumeristic society, vividly depicted through the TV show "Solvathellam Sathyam" (Yours Truly). Ostracized by family, Aruvi navigates a world that challenges her ideals and beliefs. The narrative subtly weaves in six songs that serve as a lens to examine the challenges posed by society. Aruvi is alienated from her family when she is diagnosed with AIDS which is accidentally transmitted to her. Seeking refuge, she befriends Emily, a transgender individual also grappling with HIV, who aids her in securing a viable income.

The plot takes a harrowing turn when Aruvi becomes a victim of sexual assault by three men—Joseph, Arulmani, and Swami—each exploiting her vulnerability in different ways. Joseph, the father of Aruvi's friend, provides shelter, Arulmani takes advantage when she pleads for a loan, and Swami hypnotizes her, subjecting her to further trauma.

Reflecting society's consumeristic behaviour, the film shifts to the TV show "Solvathellam Sathyam" (Yours Truly). Initially portraying Aruvi as an innocent victim, the show takes a dark turn when Aruvi discloses her HIV-positive status. The host, influenced by a consumeristic mindset, attempts to shift blame onto Aruvi, questioning her motives.

The narrative reaches a climax when it is revealed that Aruvi is armed with a gun and takes the TV crew hostage. A subsequent HIV test on the three men shows they are not infected, leaving Aruvi to grapple with the harsh reality of her disease amid the complex web of societal judgments and prejudices.

### ***Super Deluxe*, 2019, Directed by Thiagarajan Kumararaja**

"Super Deluxe" introduces a diverse set of characters, with four interwoven stories in parallel.

In the first story, Shilpa, formerly Manickam, undergoes a transformative journey as a trans woman, highlighting the struggles faced by the transgender community in a society laden with prejudice. Jyothi and Rasukutty represent a family awaiting the return of an absent father, who surprises them with a significant personal change, challenging societal norms. However, the family accepts them.

The second story is about Leela, The TV story revolves around five teenage friends – Gaaji, Soori, Mohan, Vasanth, and Thuyavan – dealing with the consequences of discovering a shocking family secret. Leela, Soori's mother, becomes central to their story, grappling with societal judgments after her involvement in the adult film industry.

In the third story, enraged by discovering Leela's involvement in a porn film, Soori attempts to harm her but accidentally stabs himself. Arputham, a tsunami survivor, wrestles with a crisis of faith. Believing Shilpa's tale of guilt, he condemns her.

Arputham forcibly subjects Soori to faith healing while Leela, struggling financially, secures medical help. Revealing diamonds in a broken Jesus statue, Arputham uses them for Soori's expenses. Leela questions faith's essence, asking if a teddy bear could replace the divine symbol. As Arputham reflects, Soori reconciles with Leela, encapsulating the complex interplay of faith, forgiveness, and family dynamics in "Super Deluxe".

In the fourth story, Vaambu and Mugil's story delves into the complexities of arranged marriages, societal expectations, and the consequences of infidelity. Vaambu is discovered to have extramarital affairs with her Ex-Boyfriend. However, their clandestine encounter takes a tragic turn when her Ex-Boyfriend unexpectedly dies during the act. The narrative explores the economic implications of preserving societal norms and the lengths individuals may go to avoid social stigma.

*Paava Kadhaigal*, 2020 directed by Sudha Kongara, Gautham Vasudev Menon, Vetrimaaran, and Vignesh Shivan.

It is an anthology of four short films that examine the themes of love, acceptance, and family relationships. The show has received widespread acclaim for its poignant portrayal of LGBTQ+ issues and its significant emotional impact.

"Thangam (Gold)" unfolds in the 1980s Kovai district, delving into the socio-cultural complexities surrounding Sathar, a Muslim Trans woman. She is never respected by society and only mocks her except for her childhood friend Saravanan whom she plans to marry. Struggling against societal norms, Sathar supports herself by aiding villagers. However, it is revealed that Saravanan is in love with Sathar's sister and plans to elope with her. Sathar helps with their elopement but faces a tragic end at the hands of the conservative society. The narrative vividly exposes the harsh realities of a conservative society, shedding light on the intersectionality of gender identity, religion, and societal prejudice during a tumultuous period in India's history.

"Love Panna Uttranum (If You Love Something, Set It Free)" explores the intricate layers of caste-based prejudices and societal expectations in a feudal village. Veerasimman's apparent endorsement of inter-caste unions masks deep-rooted hatred for the same. He takes it far to the extent that he kills his daughter, Aadhilakshmi. Graciously the other daughter Jothilakshmi escapes from the same fate. The film sheds light on the grim consequences of inter-caste relationships, portraying the harsh reality of honour killings. Ultimately, it hints at the possibility of societal transformation, as Veerasimman's escape to France signifies a change of heart, providing a glimmer of hope for a more inclusive future.

In "Vaanmagal," Sathya and Mathi, a middle-class couple, grapple with the aftermath of their daughter Ponnuthaayi's traumatic experience. Ponnuthaayi was mistakenly kidnapped instead of Vaidehi and was sexually abused. Choosing to keep the incident private, they face societal judgment and rumours. Bharath, the older brother, seeks revenge on the perpetrator, highlighting the complexities of seeking justice outside the legal system. Mathi's internal struggle reflects the societal pressure on women to protect family honour, even at the cost of their mental well-being.

In "Oor Iravu," Sumathi's joyous reunion with her estranged family takes a dark turn when her father, Janakiraman, reveals deep-seated caste prejudices. The narrative unveils the extreme lengths Janakiraman goes to uphold societal norms, resorting to poisoning Sumathi to preserve caste pride. Janakiraman kills his daughter and her unborn child to restore the family's honour. The story explores the consequences of rigid caste hierarchies and the tragic impact on individuals who challenge societal expectations. Sumathi's husband Hari's pursuit of justice adds a layer of societal critique, questioning the consequences of deeply ingrained prejudices.

### **Inferences from Movie Analysis**

#### **Patriarchy and Gender Inequality**

Across films like "*The Great Indian Kitchen*," "*Aruvi*," and "*Paava Kadhaigal*," there is a consistent portrayal of patriarchal norms and gender inequality deeply embedded in South Indian society. Women in these movies struggle against traditional expectations, societal norms, and religious influences that reinforce gender-based roles and limitations.

#### **Subversion of Stereotypes**

"*Uyare*" and "*Super Deluxe*" challenge traditional cinematic formulas and societal stereotypes. "*Uyare*" defies the typical hero-centric narrative, focusing on an acid attack survivor's journey, while "*Super Deluxe*" weaves multiple unconventional stories, including a trans woman's transformative journey, breaking away from typical representations of gender and identity.

#### **Response to Violence and Exploitation**

"*22 Female Kottayam*" and "*Aruvi*" present powerful responses to violence and exploitation against women. The former explores intense revenge, going beyond conventional storytelling by opting for a form of punishment that resonates with the storyline. In "*Aruvi*," the protagonist takes a bold stance against sexual assault and societal judgment, challenging the established norms.

## **Intersectionality and Social Realities**

"*Paava Kadhaigal*" examines intersectionality by addressing LGBTQ+ issues, caste-based prejudices, and the consequences of rigid societal norms. The stories provide a nuanced portrayal of how individuals navigate through the complex layers of societal expectations and the impact of these expectations on their lives.

## **Consumerism and Social Critique**

"*Aruvi*" offers a critique of a consumeristic society through the portrayal of a TV show, showcasing how media can contribute to societal judgments. The film questions the values perpetuated by consumer-driven narratives and explores the harsh realities faced by individuals who don't conform to societal expectations.

## **Courage and Empowerment**

"*Uyare*" and "*The Great Indian Kitchen*" emphasize the importance of courage and empowerment. The characters in these films, particularly the heroines, break free from abusive relationships, confront patriarchy, and challenge societal norms, symbolizing resilience and self-respect.

## **Justice and Consequences**

"22 Female Kottayam" and "*Paava Kadhaigal*" explore the themes of justice and consequences in different ways. While the former presents revenge as a form of justice, the latter showcases the tragic consequences faced by individuals challenging societal expectations, highlighting the complexities of seeking justice outside the legal system.

## **Hope and Transformation**

"*Paava Kadhaigal*" suggests the possibility of societal transformation, offering glimpses of hope amid grim realities. The escape to France in "*Love Panna Uttranum*" symbolizes a potential shift in societal attitudes, indicating that change is conceivable even in deeply ingrained cultural norms.

In summary, these South Indian movies collectively provide a rich tapestry of socio-cultural commentary, addressing issues of patriarchy, gender-based violence, societal expectations, and the complexities of justice. The narratives also reflect the changing dynamics and evolving perspectives within South Indian cinema, contributing to broader discussions on social issues.



## Conclusion

Upon analyzing South Indian films from Tamil Nadu and Kerala, it becomes clear that women are portrayed diversely. The themes explored in these films include patriarchy, gender inequality, violence, and societal expectations. They reveal the complex socio-cultural fabric of the region and offer a narrative landscape that challenges traditional stereotypes. The bravery, empowerment, and responses to exploitation showcased in these films highlight the potential for societal transformation. While some films dive into the harsh realities individuals face when confronting societal norms, others offer glimpses of hope, indicating the possibility of change. This cinematic exploration provides valuable insights into the evolving dynamics of South Indian cinema and prompts critical discussions on gender-based issues and societal attitudes. It contributes to a broader dialogue on inclusivity, justice, and the role of cinema in shaping societal perceptions.

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## **The Evolution of Female Characters in Tamil Cinema and its Impact**

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### **Abstract**

Cinema has become an important medium to educate, enlighten, inform, and entertain. Movies allow us to cognitively transport to a different time or space and gain acumen about new perspectives, inspirations, and understanding. Tamil cinema is one of the most influential and popular forms of entertainment and has produced several films that portray strong, empowered, and independent women characters who challenge the patriarchal norms and stereotypes of society. For centuries it has been a strenuous struggle for a woman to ensure her freedom in all aspects and cinema has helped by spreading the message that woman is no longer inferior or subordinate. There is always an inner rage in a woman to break all the obstacles created by men and establish an identity of her own. No doubt that owing to cinema has always been a reflection of women's experience in society and has played a great role in shaping society. This paper discusses how cinema has always been a reflection of women's experiences in society and has played a great role in shaping society.

**Keywords:** Tamil cinema, heroines, social transformation, movie's contribution

### **Introduction**

Cinema or Movies is an art form that reflects the cultural and social state of the region, nation, or world. As a powerful source cinema has become an important medium to educate, enlighten, inform, and entertain. Stories in cinema relate the incidents with our own experiences and make us connected, and while watching movies one can gain insights about diverse cultures and lifestyles that enable us to understand different peoples' way of life. Movies allow us to cognitively transport to a different time or space and gain acumen about new perspectives, inspirations, and understanding.

Cinema serves as a mirror to society it reflects joys, complexities, and struggles. Cinema is not just an entertaining medium, communicates and spreads a lot of messages, concepts, and ideas that sometimes trigger in us a positive note. It incites critical thinking and enables reflection upon complex subjects such as politics, inequality, environmental concerns, social justice, etc. Watching world cinema offers insight into unique cultures, challenging stereotypes and understanding among different communities.

Movies or Cinema reflect society; and portray the struggles and challenges present in a society. It has the power to shape our beliefs and values, as it is fictional as well as real cinema makes us accept different art forms and cultures and at times also teaches us some practical reality. This paper discusses the importance given to female roles in Tamil cinema, portraying them as bold and empowered women breaking the stereotype or the taboos that are determined in a male-designed society.

### **Tamil Cinema**

The history of Tamil Cinema began in 1897 and the first-ever movie show of South India was screened by M. Edwards at the Victoria Memorial Hall in Madras. The first feature film of South India was 'Keechavathanam' in 1917 by R.Venkaiah. Nataraja Mudaliyar.

'Kalidas' the first Tamil film was screened in 1931 and was also screened in Telugu by H.M.Reddy based on the life of a poet in which T.P.Rajalakshmi was the female lead who later emerged as the first female producer and director and made a Tamil film 'Miss Kamala' in 1936. A sensation in South Indian Cinema was created by A.V. Meiyappan by introducing playback singing in his film 'Nandakumar' which was released in 1938. 'Gemini Studios' emerged as the trendsetter in the early forties of Tamil Cinema which gave great hits like 'Madhana Kamarajan', 'Nandhanaar' and 'Chandralekha'. Tamil Cinema has given many Chief Ministers to Tamil Nadu like C.N. Annadurai, Dr. M. Karunanidhi, Dr. M.G. Ramachandran, and Dr. J. Jayalaitha. From the beginning, Cinema has created a powerful impact and has been a great platform for politics. Even in the present scenario cine actors enter into politics and launch their party, in this list are Late. Captian Vijayakant, Kamalahasan, and recently it's Vijay.

The first colour film of Tamil was produced by Modern Theaters in 1955 'Alibabhavum Narpathu Thirudargalum', the first full-length colour film, and the first cinemascope film in Tamil was 'Rajarajacholan' in 1973. Changes in cinema have been accepted through the ages and Tamil cinema has also undergone many changes, at present it has brought in the best of story writers, directors, actors, music composers, cinematographers, editors, and above all, influential producers who are willing to experiment beyond expectations.

### **Tamil Cinema and its Heroines**

In the early days, Tamil Cinema gave more relevance to the female lead role. Kalidas', the first Tamil talkie, with T.P. Rajalakshmi playing the lead role and in 'Sevasadanam' the legendary singer M.S. Subbulakshmi played the lead role. However, this slowly changed and the female characters were just a part of an entertainer in the movies.

But in the 1980's the concept of using the heroine in films just as an entertainer changed and the characters were framed more in a way that was to break the stereotypes prevailing in the society.

*In Vidhi* 1984, Sujatha and Poornima are the main roles, where the first is an authoritative lawyer and the latter is portrayed as a daring woman who seeks the court for justice when she is betrayed by her lover. This was a bold movie in the 1980s with a message that a woman is strong enough to make her own decisions.

*Vaijyanthi IPS*, 1991 which portrays Vijayasanthi as a powerful character, who is an IPS officer shows that women are in no way inferior to men and equally talented and powerful. It broke the stereotype that only men are capable of being higher officials in uniform services. It encouraged many women to join uniform services and serve for the society. The movie had an important impact on society.

*36 Vayadhinile*, 2015, Joythika in the lead role, portrays the feelings of a woman who is not acknowledged by her family members and begins her journey of self-discovery. Even though the film talks about feminism, it is applicable. Every middle-aged working woman related to her character and was inspired to be like her. This movie opened the gate for women's empowerment and resilience in society.

*Irudhi Suttru*, 2016, Madhi, a character played by Ritika Singh is a brave fighter, not only in the boxing ring but also fighting for food for her family. Madhi's life takes an unexpected turn when her talent is identified by a boxing coach who encourages her to pursue a career in boxing. But her journey was not that easy, she overcame all her struggles and challenges with determination. This movie inspired many women to get involved in sports despite their living conditions.

*Kaana*, 2018, revolves around a small-town girl's struggle to make a mark in Indian cricket. Her father encourages her dreams and defends her when the villagers don't approve of her being "non-traditional". She does not give up and breaks the patriarchal norms and visions towards her goal. There is often a misconception that women don't play or watch sports. Kaana breaks this and is an inspiration for every girl who grows up in a male-designed society and faces a lot of challenges to win in life. The movie gives a message to fight against all hurdles and not give up no matter what, success always follows hard work.

*Annapoorani*, 2023, stars Nayantara in this movie the daughter from an orthodox family goes against her family's wishes to become a talented chef. This movie talks about the voices of women who are made voiceless due to customs and traditions and the decisions taken are by the family members and no importance for individuality is given. The female lead character fights for her goals despite her inability to sense taste in a male chauvinist society to attain fame and success.

## Movie's Contribution to Social Transformation

Cinema or Movies has always been a source of inspiration and motivation and especially Tamil movies have contributed a lot to social changes. Throughout history, movies have played a main role in promoting social change positively. The characters in movies inspire a lot of people to achieve something in their lives. Cinema audiences can get positive influence over the characters, especially women audiences as they visualize representation over the characters and many female-centric movies have motivated the women community to chase their goals by breaking all the barriers and encouraging them to feel more positive and work on their potential.

## Conclusion

Over the past decades, Tamil Cinema has gone through significant transformation and women portrayed in movies have a drastic change. This paper discusses the movies that have created an impact on women's development and how contemporary cinema portrays women as more independent, educated, and empowered and appears to create a space for them on a positive note. For centuries it has been a strenuous struggle for a woman to ensure her freedom in all aspects and cinema has helped by spreading the message that woman is no longer inferior or subordinate. There is always an inner rage in a woman to break all the obstacles created by men and establish an identity of her own. No doubt that owing to cinema has always been a reflection of women's experience in society and has played a great role in shaping society by breaking stereotypes and bringing social evil practices to light.

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## **Representation of Woman in the Movie ‘Soorarai Pottru’ Shifted the Stereotype - Narrative Analysis**

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### **Abstract**

This paper mainly focuses on the attributes of the character Bommi in the movie *Soorarai Pottru*. This movie is based on the real incident. In women-centric movies, there is no surprise that women have been portrayed as the centre of interest, the special importance of women in stressing their tussles and hardships will be narrated to emphasize the character in women-centric movies. Though *Soorarai Pottru* is not a women-centric it needs a special mention of the portrayal of the character Bommi. It speaks about voice of the women in terms of ambition, equal rights, marriage of equals, etc.

**Keywords:** Women's representation, equal rights, marriage of equals, equalitarian marriage and women's economic independence, portrayal of women, Narrative Analysis

### **Introduction**

Cinema has always played a vital role in social change. It is a perfect medium for spreading messages to a large number of people because it represents political, social, and cultural values that are consistent with beliefs in a certain society at a particular moment. Furthermore, movies deliver timely messages about a range of subjects, such as societal issues, family drama, romance, and religion (Kumari & Joshi, 2015). Despite their ability to unite people, they propagate and reinforce preconceptions that lead to the underrepresentation of women in society. Rarely do films like *Soorarai Pottru* portray women in society in a positive light. This change propagates values and sounds good. Once in a blue moon movies like *Soorarai Pottru* represent high about women in the society. This transformation sounds positive and spreads values. An analysis of the movie *Soorarai Pottru* grounding Feminist Sociological Theory reveals women's rights, equalitarian marriage, and economic independence even after marriage in breaking the stereotypical representation of women on screen.

*Soorari Pottru* the multi-star film adaptation of Captain Gopinath's memoirs *Simply Fly: A Deccan Odyssey* is called *Soorarai Pottru*.

Gopinath writes about his difficulties in trying to start a low-cost aviation service in this book. Suriya, Aparna Balamurali, and Paresh Rawal comprise the core cast of the film, which is directed and written by Sudha Kongara (of *Irudhi Suttru* and, more recently, *Putham Pudhu Kaalai*). Urvashi and Mohan Babu play significant supporting roles.

### **Review of Literature**

Men are overrepresented whereas women have long been misrepresented (Murphy, 2015). Generally speaking, women are vital in many areas of life, including the home, the workforce, and parenting. The dominance of men should not marginalize women such that they are unable to fully realize their potential and their place in society. To empower women, help them realize their potential, challenge the world that is controlled by men, and bring about more social change, the media is essential (Kumari & Joshi, 2015).

### **Cinema and Society**

The fact that the cinema may operate as a bridge between social realities and individual dreams, cooperative issues and individual objectives, makes it a foundational form of humanistic spoken communication that can help us think about our lives in new ways (Jain and Rai, 2002). Cinema, ever since its inception in 1913 with the release of "*Raja Harish Chandra*," has been India's most widely used medium for communication. Film: The film featured a mythological setting and was silent (Verma, 2019). This paved the way for content filmmakers in the ensuing years. Images from religious scriptures and Indian epics, such as the *Ramayana*, demonstrate the depth and breadth of Indian culture. Alam The first Indian film, *Ara*, was released in 1931. The rest of Indian cinema was shaped by this film (Allemand, 2015).

### **Gender Gap in Cinema**

The male-dominated nature of the film business is one of the primary causes of women's uneven representation on screen. It is evident that men write, direct, and produce most movies, which means that there are fewer prospects for female directors. (Kunsey, forthcoming). Overall film business presents a specific viewpoint on women from a patriarchal standpoint. Women are stereotyped and given secondary portrayals because of their conventional duties as mothers, wives, and lovers. Furthermore, those positions are more valuable to women than being self-reliant and intellectual. Women are also portrayed in the film business as idealized beauty objects that provide sex appeal and amusement. (Ullah & Rahman, 2022).



## **Women in Indian Cinema**

Lagamba, J. L. (2012) claims that the majority of the movies feature women whose identity shifts as a result of their vulnerabilities. Women alter their identities despite their anxiety and urge to take action. Furthermore, Agarwal (2014) claims that over a few decades, women's roles in Indian cinema have undergone several notable transformations. The patriarchal Indian society has been impacted by the rapidly evolving role of women in Indian cinema. Additionally, Murphy, J. N. (2015) investigated the significance of prevailing themes about views toward women today and how they can influence gender representation and equality in the future. Lagamba, J. L. (2012) also states that the majority of the movies feature women whose identity shifts as a result of their vulnerabilities. Women alter their identities despite their anxiety and urge to take action. Furthermore, Agarwal (2014) claims that over a few decades, women's roles in Indian cinema have undergone several notable transformations. The patriarchal Indian society has been impacted by the rapidly evolving role of women in Indian cinema. Additionally, Murphy, J. N. (2015) investigated the significance of prevailing themes about views toward women today and how they can influence gender representation and equality in the future.

Amrutha (2018) claims that while women attempt to shield themselves from the struggle in nearly all female-oriented films, men typically don't even provide them assistance. Men are therefore viewed as adversaries in films that focus on women. In cinema, it also becomes a stereotype. Volume 22, Issue 5, May 2023 YMERE || ISSN 0044-0477 The website ymerdigital.com Page Number: Two According to Talukdar's (2018) analysis, how male role characters are portrayed in culturally specific contexts creates underlying meaning. Few female actors can secure main roles that propel them to popularity when paired with male actors, according to Kusuma K (2018). According to Banerjee, S. (2021), themes of hyper-masculinity have historically been present in Tamil cinema, which has historically predominantly starred men. Now it has changed to a strategy that is more focused on women. Furthermore, Pichanot, P. (2021) asserts that it's critical to highlight how the government shapes gender norms. Because heroes are typically shown as active characters in movies, whereas heroines are typically presented as passive.

## **Methodology**

The study aims to examine how the character Bommi deviates from the stereotype of women in Indian cinema. By analyzing the woman character in the film *Sorarai Pottru* and defining equal rights even after marriage, the study has utilized a qualitative methodology. The actual situation of women after marriage is still repressed in the patriarchal society. Therefore, while discussing egalitarian marriages and equal rights, this demands special consideration. The stereotyped appearance of the character Bommi and its significance in telling women's rights are examined in a narrative analysis of the character in *Sorarai Pottru*.

## Objectives

- To explore the weightage of the character Bommi in terms of expressing women's rights even after marriage
- To examine how Bommi, a character in the film *Sorarai Pottru*, defies the stereotype of the traditional feminine figure
- To investigate how important the character Bommi is for advocating egalitarian marriage life.

## Theoretical Framework

The feminist sociological theory, which Adams and Sydie contend is a critical theory concerning the women-centred perspective, serves as the foundation for the entire study. It ponders how societal change might take place to create a more compassionate world. It also challenges the fundamental ideas and presumptions of sociology. The idea that men and women should have equal access to opportunity, respect, and social rights is known as feminism. Using narrative analysis, the feminist sociology theory's philosophies of economic independence and equal rights for social change have been used in Bommi's character analysis.

## Analysis and Discussion

### Bommi Defies the Traditional Image of a Woman

The way she is portrayed, Bommi defies the stereotype of the Tamil heroine. She defies conventional notions of beauty with her dusky skin tone and non-size-zero body. She is unusual, and curious, talks back to elders, and wants to open her bakery. However, the wit and glitter in Bommi's eyes add special attention to the character rather than her physical appearance.

Among the most enduring characters in upcoming motion pictures, Kongara doesn't just become the hero's spouse; instead, she allows Bommi's character to be herself and compete with the irascible Maaran (her three pre-nuptial conditions are evidence of her ethos), without taking over their relationship. If we allow it, a strong, sensible woman can live in any place with dignity. We can now cite another case to support it.

A significant number of filmmakers have rebelled against the clichés perpetuated by popular films and ventured to approach themes from the viewpoint of women. Modern movies with unusual topics and prominent female leads include *No One Killed Jessica* (2011), *Cheeni Kum* (2007), *Chameli* (2003), *Ishqiya* (2010), *Paa* (2009), and *Dirty Picture* (2011). These movies have compelled filmmakers to reconsider the many parts that women have portrayed and to consider the type of typecasting that was previously prevalent.

## **Bommi and Maaran: An Egalitarian Marriage**

While both Maaran and Bommi are bright lights of egalitarian marriage, their portrayals are quite realistic; rather than appearing to magically transform into flawless individuals, they actively strive to be better partners to one another. She is self-sufficient and independent, and she plans to remain so. She supports him by becoming his pillar of strength. They disagree (both literally and figuratively, with Harish Sivaramakrishnan sullyng Veyyon Silli), but they continue to be each other's strongest allies, never undermining the aspirations of the other. When Maaran does, Bommi doesn't back down; instead, she defends her dreams without allowing it to become a point of dispute in their relationship. This is a landmark moment in Tamil movie history since it shows egalitarian weddings on a large scale, raising the bar for more accurate depictions of marital politics.

When she questions her parents' sexism. Whenever Maara falters, she also asks Maara questions. Maara responds, "24 banks have rejected him," to her claim that twenty men had rejected her. Alternatively, Maara returns the favour when she vents her annoyance to her by saying, "I might have had you searching for me for another 50 miles if I weren't pregnant." Her attitude is so refreshingly authentic, and her charm lies in her bold spirit. (It also helps that Aparna Balamurali gives an amazing performance, and she genuinely appears like the woman next door.) Beyond these wide-ranging, evident advantages, *Soorarai Pottru* continues to provide strong representation. Consider Boomi's bond with Maara's mother Pechi, who is expertly portrayed by Urvashi. Not merely Bommi has been written with great consideration. Pechi grinned and said, "Un Thimiruku Eththa Ponnu Dhan (She's quite the match for your arrogance)" after Bommi rejected Maara. Bommi is the one who invites Pechi to dance during their wedding, handing her a black handkerchief. Later on, Pechi presents her with jewellery, which includes her *Thaali*, for Bommi's brand-new bakery.

She even tries her hand at baking a cake. These modest actions and moments warmed hearts. Seeing how much love there is for Bommi and how many people share their adoration for her on social media, or even confess that they wish they had a partner like her, is encouraging. From this, it is evident that when movies avoid providing strong representation, those same people will also speak up and pose the appropriate questions.

## **Conclusion**

Bommi, the lead actress, really takes the cake. Bommi, a feisty and intelligent heroine, is perhaps one of the greatest we have seen recently in mainstream Tamil cinema. Seeing a character like that receive so much affection gives hope. It indicates that, at the very least, individuals value more accurate representation. There are no more justifications that never had a convincing explanation.

A common cinematic cliché involves portraying the hero as a rescuer who intervenes to save the heroine. After the hero saves them from random rowdies, the majority of our ladies fall in love. But in this movie, Bommi—more precisely, his dream—saves Maara. Maara may pursue his aspirations in the skies thanks to her unwavering support on the ground. She may not agree with everything he does, but she steadfastly supports his aspirations. As a partner should, she comprehends the former and challenges the latter as needed. She isn't a martyr, though, thanks to the narrative and direction of the movie. Maara supports her goals and objectives as well. He helps her out with her business and shows her around using the trays from the bakery. These become little bits in a montage because this is Maara's story, yet the relationship is still one of equality.

It challenges the constrictive gender norms that also affect and burden men, *Sooraraipottru* is distinctive in all these ways. In an interview, Sudha Kongara noted, "My fantasy is equality; the male fantasy is to see the point as a 'loosu.'" Furthermore, equality exists. So, demonstrate it," she says. She describes how she maintained the scene where Maara begs her for money despite strong opposition from the male writers in her writing room.

Since they make these kinds of judgments, it is frequently argued that more female voices in film are needed. Men can still make these kinds of decisions; it's just that it's easier for them to decide not to. Women are often treated unfairly in this world. Bommi, however, is fascinating since she immediately responds to any patriarchal idea that is thrown at her. When an unknown traveller tries to impart knowledge about a woman's role in the household, she doesn't take it well.

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## **Representation of Working Women in Tamil Films**

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### **Abstract**

The representation of women in Indian cinema, including Kollywood, has been a subject of discussion and critique since the beginning of time. Women in Tamil cinema have often been portrayed in traditional roles, such as the submissive wife, sacrificing mother, or love interest. Stereotypes like the "damsel in distress" or the "pure and innocent woman" have been prevalent. In recent years, there has been a noticeable shift in the portrayal of women with an increasing number of films depicting female characters who are working professionals in Tamil cinema. Filmmakers and audiences have shown an increased interest in stories that highlight the strength, independence, and diversity of female characters. Actresses have been taking on more substantial and diverse roles, breaking away from traditional stereotypes. This paper analysis the number of working women represented in Tamil films in the year 2023 and how they have been portrayed in popular Kollywood movies. This study majorly discusses how Tamil films show empowered women on screen and what kind of importance their roles hold in those films.

**Key Words:** Tamil cinema, Kollywood, women representation, stereotype, working women.

### **Introduction**

The landscape of Indian cinema, particularly in the vibrant realm of Kollywood, has long been a canvas reflecting societal norms and cultural values. The portrayal of women in Tamil cinema, echoing broader trends in Indian film, has been a subject of extensive discourse and critique. The industry's historical penchant for depicting women in traditional roles, such as the submissive wife, sacrificing mother, or love interest, has often been a focal point of discussion, drawing attention to entrenched stereotypes like the "damsel in distress" or the "pure and innocent woman."

However, recent years have witnessed a discernible evolution in the representation of women on the silver screen, particularly in Tamil cinema. This shift is characterized by an increasing number of films featuring female characters in roles that extend beyond the confines of conventional archetypes. A notable departure from the norm has seen filmmakers and audiences alike embracing narratives that spotlight the strength, independence, and diversity of female characters. Actresses, in turn, are taking on more substantial and diverse roles, breaking away from the shackles of traditional stereotypes that have constrained the portrayal of women in cinema.

This research paper delves into the representation of working women in Tamil films during the year 2023, with a specific focus on how these characters have been portrayed in popular Kollywood movies. The study aims to unravel the nuanced dynamics at play in the depiction of empowered women on screen and to discern the importance accorded to their roles in the narratives.

The transformation in the portrayal of women in Tamil cinema is not only reflective of changing societal attitudes but also indicative of a conscious effort by filmmakers to showcase a more authentic and progressive representation of women. By analysing the cinematic landscape of 2023, this research seeks to shed light on the extent to which working women have been integrated into the narratives and how their characters have been crafted.

Furthermore, the paper endeavours to explore the significance of these portrayals, examining the impact they have on societal perceptions and the empowerment of women. It will investigate whether the newfound prominence of working women in Tamil cinema translates into a broader cultural shift or remains confined to the realm of entertainment.

As the research unfolds, it will delve into specific examples from popular Kollywood movies, dissecting the characterizations of working women to unravel the layers of representation. By scrutinizing the narratives, character arcs, and dialogues, the paper aims to discern patterns and trends that illuminate the evolving role of women in Tamil cinema.

This study endeavours to contribute to the ongoing dialogue surrounding the portrayal of women in Indian cinema, specifically within the dynamic context of Tamil films. By focusing on the representation of working women in 2023, the study aims to provide insights into the evolving narrative landscape and the pivotal role played by empowered female characters in shaping cinematic storytelling.

## **Literature Review**

Ruchi Agarwal in the paper “Changing Role of Women in Indian Cinema” talks about how the transformation in the representation of women in films has been gradual rather than abrupt, prompting a discussion on whether films reflect real life or if life imitates films. Despite a significant number of women contributing to both urban and rural areas, movies often neglect this reality. Observing the portrayal of women in mainstream cinema, it appears as though time has stood still for them. While characterizations have become more intricate, the fundamental role has not undergone substantial changes. Heroines are still burdened with stereotypical roles.

Fortunately, several directors have garnered acclaim by presenting audiences with narratives that deviate from conventional storylines. This shift proves advantageous for actresses seeking roles that break away from traditional stereotypes.

According to the research article “Indian Cinema and Women” by Sonu Sharma and Dr. Jitendar Singh Narban within the Indian film industry, women have played crucial roles in contributing to the success of individual films. However, their roles have evolved, transitioning from complete dependence on their male counterparts to autonomously driving the storyline forward. Women in the Indian film industry have set impressive records, exemplified by Lata Mangeshkar's recognition in the Guinness Book as the world's most-recorded artist, and Helen's dance performances in over a thousand films. Cinema serves as a vital medium for portraying influential characters that inspire us on multiple levels, and in this regard, women have not lagged.

In the article “Globalisation and Representations of Women in Indian Cinema” Sangeeta Datta talks about how in the realm of Indian mainstream cinema, there persists a portrayal of female sexuality through a patriarchal lens. Masculinity is often characterized by a muscular physique and a penchant for physical aggression. The cinematic experience has shifted towards prioritizing visual extravagance and a mix of scenes, replacing traditional song and dance sequences. These sequences, set in diverse international locations, tend to disrupt the viewer's perception of time and space. Interestingly, the focus on pleasure has taken precedence over a commitment to a cohesive narrative, marking a notable shift in cinematic priorities.

Sharaf Rehman in the study “Women and Contemporary Indian Cinema” says that in contemporary films, young women are portrayed as self-reliant individuals, in contrast to the female characters in 1940s and 1950s films who often depended on men. This shift is not surprising, given the increasing presence of women in professions previously inaccessible to them, such as airline pilots, investigative reporters, police officers, business owners, and attorneys. In India, women have become more competitive, assertive, and fearless. Societal attitudes have also evolved towards a more liberal perspective on dating, premarital sex, and gender equality, as noted by Datta in 2007. These societal changes are reflected in modern films, where there is a noticeable trend of featuring women as central characters rather than merely serving as accessories to the leading male roles.

In the article “A study on the portrayal of the career woman in Tamil films”, Rupa Peter discusses how in Tamil movies, the depiction of career women is characterized by strength, self-reliance, and financial independence.



Nevertheless, these women also grapple with instances of sexual harassment and endure a constant male gaze. It's noteworthy that contemporary Tamil films have expanded beyond traditional roles for women, like housewives and teachers, to include portrayals of women in the IT and media industries. However, for a more positive perception of career women among the Tamil movie-going audience, it would be beneficial to present a healthier portrayal of women in professional roles. This includes depicting their strength and independence, as well as emphasizing the acceptance of career women by men in these movies. Such a shift in narrative could contribute to a more positive and empowering representation of women pursuing careers in the eyes of the audience.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study relies on various theories and concepts derived from feminism and gender studies as its theoretical framework.

The Glass Ceiling, as presented by Hymowitz and Schehardt in 1986, discusses an unseen obstacle that impedes the career progression of women, particularly highlighting instances of gender discrimination. According to this social theory, societal norms contribute to the perception that men should prioritize career achievements, while women are expected to focus more on emotions. These distinctions are believed to be learned through the process of socialization.

The role congruity theory, another significant concept, suggests that adopting a career-oriented mindset is viewed as conflicting with traditional notions of femininity. Furthermore, it argues that women in leadership roles may experience difficulties in balancing their professional and personal lives, potentially undermining their career ambitions.

The social learning theory posits that individuals' work habits and task approach skills are shaped by a combination of past experiences, genetic factors, and environmental influences.

Feminist theories integrated into the research delve into multifaceted issues within the workplace. These include exploring the quest for social and economic equality between genders, and analyzing power dynamics and labor distribution across male and female populations. Additionally, these theories address the pervasive problems of sexual and physical harassment in work environments. They also draw attention to the critical concern of unpaid labor, particularly within domestic settings.

### **Objective**

- To understand if the female characters 'career role' is given significance in Tamil movies
- To study how a career woman is portrayed in Tamil films
- To understand how the intellectuality of working women is used in Tamil films

## **Methodology**

This is an exploratory study that is based on a qualitative research method to examine the depiction of the 'career woman' in Tamil cinema. The study utilizes content analysis as a tool to comprehensively grasp and interpret the representations of women in professional roles within Tamil films. This study will contain a detailed analysis of working women from randomly picked five movies released in the year 2023

## **Research Analysis**

The analysis encompasses a selection of five Tamil movies from 2023 featuring both male and female protagonists in prominent roles. The criteria for choosing these films include the condition that the female lead should be employed, and the movie should showcase a balanced representation of both genders, as opposed to being solely focused on women. This approach facilitates a more straightforward examination and comparison of the portrayals of working women in the Kollywood industry during the past year.

### ***Vaathi***

"Vaathi," a Tamil film released in 2023, centers around an upright school teacher who, due to internal politics within a private institution, is transferred to a school in the village of Sozhavaram. The protagonist faces challenges adapting to rural life but forms a strong emotional bond with the students, striving to help them excel academically despite various obstacles.

The female lead, Meenakshi, is also a teacher working alongside the hero. Her character is depicted as exceptionally attractive, attracting attention from her colleagues. However, despite being an educator, she is primarily acknowledged for her beauty rather than her intelligence. Throughout the film, she is portrayed accompanying the hero and attentively listening to him. The heroine's on-screen presence is minimal, lacking impact, and her role seems forced and unnecessary. Essentially, there is no substantive need for a female lead in this movie

### ***Maaveeran***

"Maaveeran," a 2023 Tamil film, centers around a young man who, following an accident, starts experiencing the presence of an enigmatic voice. The crux of the movie lies in exploring the events that transpire when he eventually hears the mysterious voice.

The female protagonist, known as Nila, assumes the role of an editor for a commercial magazine within the storyline. She is portrayed as a woman characterized by her boldness and confidence.

Throughout the film, Nila consistently emerges as a source of motivation for the male lead. Beyond this, she actively engages in providing solutions to the challenges faced by the hero in various situations. Despite not occupying a central role in the film, Nila functions as the backbone for the male protagonist, consistently encouraging him to make morally upright decisions. Her character, though not playing a focal part, still stands out as a vital and supportive force within the narrative

### ***Irugapatru***

"Irugapatru," a Tamil film released in 2023, delves into the lives of three married couples facing distinct challenges in their marital journeys, showcasing how they navigate and overcome these hurdles.

The first female lead, Mithra, is portrayed as a couple psychologist with a humble and loving nature towards her husband. Despite not exhibiting any anger, a revelation unfolds that she employs an app to continually surprise her husband, aiming to avoid the pitfalls witnessed in the relationships of her clients. While her character is not depicted negatively, it subtly conveys a message about the challenges women may face in balancing professional and personal lives.

The second heroine, Dhivya, is a working married woman who initially appears disinterested in her husband. The narrative later discloses that her husband consistently humiliates and demeans her when she displays intelligence. This storyline addresses toxic masculinity, highlighting societal expectations where men feel threatened if women are perceived as smarter. Ultimately, Dhivya seeks a divorce, prompting her husband's realization of his mistakes and a heartfelt apology.

The third heroine, Pavithra, initially portrayed as a devoted homemaker, faces neglect from her husband due to her appearance. Determined to win back his affection, she embarks on a journey to lose weight. When financial challenges arise, Pavithra takes up a job to support the family, transforming from a silent and obedient wife into a confident and independent woman. This narrative serves as an empowering story for married homemakers, illustrating their potential for personal growth and resilience.

### ***Chithha***

"Chithha" is a 2023 Tamil film that revolves around a man who loves his niece as much as his own. She goes missing and later finds out that she's been sexually abused by an old man. To what extent will the hero go to punish this paedophiliac is the synopsis of the film.

The heroine of the movie who goes by the name Sakthi is shown to be very bold yet humble and simple. In a scene, it is revealed that she used to be extremely good in academics but ends up becoming a street sweeper.

It is later revealed that she was sexually abused by her uncle which led her to stop her education and many years later she became a street sweeper to earn for her family. This proves both the Role Congruity theory and Social Learning theory. The role congruity theory talks about how women in leadership roles may experience difficulties in balancing their professional and personal lives, potentially undermining their career ambitions. And Social Learning theory states that individuals' work habits and task approach skills are shaped by a combination of past experiences, genetic factors, and environmental influences. Though she was a very bright student she didn't pursue her education of what happened in her past. She is also shown to get defensive whenever someone asks about her past insisting that she has not recovered from it and it has scarred her deeply. Despite this, she does have a strong impact in the film because we can see her constantly advising and providing solutions to the hero on how to handle a particular situation.

### ***Joe***

"Joe," a 2023 Tamil film, revolves around a young man grappling with a painful love breakup who enters into a marriage with a woman he barely knows. The narrative unfolds as the protagonists work to mend their relationship. While both male and female leads are present, the male protagonist receives more screen time, with a detailed exploration of his past. In contrast, the heroine's backstory is only revealed in the last 10 minutes of the film.

The female lead, Shruthi, holds the position of a college correspondent, a role affiliated with her father's ownership of the institution. This implies that she might have obtained her position based on her familial connection rather than personal merit, aligning with the Glass Ceiling theory. The film suggests that if not for her father, she might have held a lower rank despite her talent. Shruthi is portrayed as rude and adamant in her role, potentially indicating an inadequacy in her job performance. Later revelations in the film unveil that her strict demeanor stems from a traumatic experience – she was sexually abused by a classmate. This disclosure aligns with both the Role Congruity theory, showcasing the challenges women in leadership roles may face, and the Social Learning theory, illustrating how past experiences shape work habits and approaches.

Shruthi's decision to impose strict rules prohibiting interactions between boys and girls in the college is a manifestation of her blending of personal and professional life, negatively impacting her management. On a positive note, she is depicted as extremely confident and bold. The film highlights the complexities of blending personal and professional aspects and the profound impact of past traumas on an individual's professional life.

## Key Findings

Based on the analysis of the five Tamil movies from 2023, the findings can be summarized as follows:

### ***Vaathi***

- The female lead, Meenakshi, is a teacher, but her role in the movie is minimal and lacks impact.
- Despite being an educator, Meenakshi is primarily acknowledged for her beauty rather than her intelligence.
- Her character seems forced and unnecessary, with no substantive need for a female lead in the movie.

### ***Maaveeran***

- The female protagonist, Nila, works as an editor for a commercial magazine and exhibits boldness and confidence.
- Nila consistently serves as a source of motivation for the male lead and actively engages in providing solutions to his challenges.
- Despite not having a central role, Nila stands out as a vital and supportive force within the narrative.

### ***Irugapatru***

- The movie explores the lives of three married couples facing distinct challenges in their marital journeys.
- Mithra, a couple psychologist, subtly conveys the challenges women may face in balancing professional and personal lives.
- Dhivya's storyline addresses toxic masculinity, highlighting societal expectations where men feel threatened if women are perceived as smarter.
- Pavithra's narrative serves as an empowering story for married homemakers, illustrating their potential for personal growth and resilience.

### ***Chithha***

- Shakthi works as a street sweeper to support the family.
- She was sexually abused by a family member when she was young
- She tries to guide the hero in the right direction
- Shakthi's role imposes that women tend to get easily sexually abused and it has a huge effect on them later on in life.

*Joe*

- The film revolves around a young man's painful love breakup and his marriage to a woman he barely knows.
- The female lead, Shruthi, holds the position of a college correspondent, potentially influenced by familial connections.
- The movie suggests that Shruthi's strict demeanour in her role is influenced by a traumatic experience – she was sexually abused by a classmate.
- Shruthi's decision to impose strict rules on college interactions reflects the challenges of blending personal and professional life.

**Overall Observations**

- The representation of working women in these movies varies, with some characters having impactful roles while others are depicted more stereotypically.
- The analysis reflects a mix of positive and negative portrayals, addressing issues such as societal expectations, workplace challenges, and the impact of personal experiences on professional life.
- The movies explore themes such as toxic masculinity, the balancing act of professional and personal lives, and the empowerment of women in different contexts.

These findings provide insights into the portrayal of female protagonists in Tamil movies from 2023, shedding light on the diversity of roles and the nuanced exploration of gender dynamics in the Kollywood industry during that year.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, the landscape of Tamil cinema, particularly in the portrayal of women, has undergone a discernible transformation in recent years, as evidenced by the cinematic offerings of 2023. The historical adherence to traditional stereotypes and limited roles for female characters has given way to a more nuanced and progressive representation. The focus on working women in popular Kollywood movies serves as a microcosm of this evolution, offering insights into changing societal attitudes and the conscious efforts of filmmakers to present more authentic narratives.

The research has unveiled a shift from the conventional archetypes of submissive wives, sacrificing mothers, and love interests towards multifaceted portrayals of women who embody strength, independence, and diversity. Actresses are now embracing roles that go beyond traditional stereotypes, contributing to a broader representation of women in cinema.

This departure from the norm is not only indicative of changing societal norms but also showcases a deliberate effort within the industry to break free from entrenched stereotypes.

Examining specific examples from popular Kollywood movies in 2023 has allowed us to dissect the characterizations of working women. The analysis of narratives, character arcs, and dialogues has revealed patterns and trends that highlight the evolving role of women in Tamil cinema. Filmmakers are increasingly integrating working women into their narratives, providing them with substantial and diverse roles that contribute to the richness of storytelling.

The significance of these portrayals goes beyond entertainment, as the research suggests that they play a role in shaping societal perceptions and contributing to the empowerment of women. By challenging traditional norms on the silver screen, these representations potentially contribute to a broader cultural shift, influencing how society views and values women in real life. The newfound prominence of empowered female characters is not merely a cinematic trend but has the potential to contribute to social change by fostering a more inclusive and equitable society.

As Tamil cinema continues to evolve, this study encourages ongoing dialogue and exploration of the representation of women in Indian cinema. By shedding light on the positive strides made in 2023, the research emphasizes the importance of authentic and progressive portrayals of women in shaping the narrative landscape. Ultimately, the evolving role of working women in Tamil cinema serves as a beacon of change, offering hope for a more inclusive and diverse cinematic future that resonates with the evolving values of society.

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## **Filmographic Metamorphosis: A Critique of Emerging Female Leadership Portrayals in Select Tamil Movies**

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### **Abstract**

Cinema is a powerful tool that influences society to a higher degree. The narratives portrayed in cinema not only act as a source of entertainment but also as a source of empowerment and enlightenment. Tamil cinema holds a splendid status in Indian cinema for its strong depiction of female characters. The past decade is notable for portraying women as good administrators. This research expounds on the representation of women's leadership in Tamil cinema, focusing on the films, *Aramm* (2017), *Ratchasi* (2019), *36 Vayadhinile* (2015), and *Soorarai Potru* (2020). These films, released in the last decade, delve into the role of women as exemplary leaders. They have broken the traditional gender stereotypes and act as a great source of encouragement for women in society. These cinematic portrayals also advocate the necessity of an inclusive society where women should be represented in equal numbers as men in all walks of life. By displaying the resilience and sturdy willpower of the female leads, these movies act as instruments of cultural reformation and societal progress. This paper exemplifies how these films remain as an avenue for social change.

**Keywords:** Female leads, Tamil cinema, cinematic empowerment, filmography, female leadership

### **Filmographic Metamorphosis: A Critique of Emerging Female Leadership Portrayals in Select Tamil Movies**

The cinema has remained India's most potent medium for popular communication since its inception in 1913 with the film "Raja Harish Chandra." Cinema has the unique potential to blend entertainment and information dissemination. It can appeal to a wide range of people. In creating such an appeal, it certainly outperforms other media. Cinema, like literature, has generated a great deal that speaks to man's deepest emotions. It re-enacts the events in such a way that future generations will be affected. (Eghosa)

Cinema has become a part and parcel of everyone's life as mentioned in the above lines. It enables the audience to think critically about societal issues and look beyond entertainment. Tamil cinema holds a prominent place in Indian cinema for its noteworthy films. It has evolved gradually and has become a global enterprise currently. The four E's of Tamil cinema are 'entertainment', 'empowerment', 'education', and 'enlightenment'.



It is widely known for its exquisite portrayal of female characters. Women empowerment is not new to Tamil cinema, unlike other cinemas. *Sati Sulochana* (1934) and *Maya Bazaar* (1957) are perfect examples that signify the above point. This is further exemplified by director K. Balachander, who has directed several female-centric movies in the 1970s and 1980s. *Aval Oru Thodar Kadhai* (1974) and *Avargal* (1977) expound on the position of women in the male-dominated society for half a century. Since 2015, Tamil cinema has started giving equal importance to the position of females as males. The recent years witnessed female leads in several positions like politicians, entrepreneurs, leaders, CEOs, etc., This paper explicates the representation of women's leadership in the movies, *Aramm* (2017), *Ratchasi* (2019), *36 Vayadhinile* (2015), and *Soorai Pottru* (2020).

*Ratchasi*, released in 2019, casts the actress Jyothika as the protagonist. The narrative is about the protagonist, Geetha Rani, who toils with dedication to enhance the quality of education in a government school. She showcases stout willpower and dauntlessness. She overcomes all the impediments on her path of great vision for rural students with a brave heart. She tackles the issues prevailing in the school with her novel ideas. By implementing several developmental measures, like setting up a library, and making the student participate in co-curricular and extracurricular activities, Geetha Rani introduces the students to the challenges of life and ways to overcome them. She takes teamwork as her primary mantra to achieve her goals. She demonstrates phenomenal qualities of leadership like empathy, compassion, vision, determination, courage, collaboration, and team building. There is no doubt that the audience views Geetha Rani as a remarkable example of leadership. Her portrayal in the movie by the director, Syed Gowthamraj, inspires the women in society to take up leadership positions and reform society amidst hurdles.

Similar to Geetha Rani in *Ratchasi*, *Aramm* shows a remarkable government officer. *Aramm* is a 2017 political film written and directed by Gopi Nainar. The female lead, Madhivathani, performed by the actress Nayanthara, is the film's best feature. Nayanthara has played the role of a district collector. The film highlights the protagonist's capacity for making snap decisions, standing up to injustice, and ultimately coming to the rescue. There is no discussion of her private life. The film has a cast of males who are all secondary characters. Madhivathani is presented as a powerful, morally responsible, brave, and compassionate woman who stands tall amidst men. Men revere her greatly because of her position and influence. She possesses outstanding qualities of leadership like determination, courage, resilience, and conviction. She also ensures that her administration goes hand in hand with integrity and transparency. It was once considered that only men were eligible to play strong roles like this. But Nayanthara has broken this prejudice with her intensity in acting.

The portrayal of characters like Madhivathani, in Tamil cinema, ignites women in society to work with unwavering commitment and valour, even in the face of adversity.

*Soorarai Pottru* is a 2020 Tamil biographical film directed by Sudha Kongara. Bommi, the female lead of this film, exhibits excellent management skills like the film's director, Sudha Kongara. The latter has broken the stereotypes related to the competence of female directors in Tamil cinema. The protagonist, Nedummaran, faces numerous hurdles in his pursuit of starting an airline that facilitates affordable travel for commoners. Kongara has not only portrayed him as an ambitious young man with tenacity but also his wife, Bommi, as a lady possessing exceptional entrepreneurial skills and perseverance. Bommi is a great source of moral support for her husband, Nedummaran. But her role doesn't stop with that. Kongara sheds light on feminism through the portrayal of Bommi. The following lines by the writer, Pavithra Selvamani, exemplify this fact:

Bommi would be seen constantly stressing Equality throughout the movie with her husband and her parents. Dialogues like, "Dreams for both of us, we need to work hard and make it big in our careers". There was also a scene in the movie where she would provide the down payment to set up his business. This instance broke the stereotype that only the male's money is the go-to cash for every financial need/crisis. (Selvamani)

Bommi is so stubborn to start a business on her own that she finally ends up launching a bakery. She doesn't give up her dream for the sake of her family. Even after marriage, she pursues her business with passion. She experiments with various types of recipes when she moves to city life after her marriage. She creates opportunities to develop her business. Bommi's qualities like perseverance, determination, clear vision, and valour make her a good administrator in her business. Though there are very few shots of her administering the business, and commanding the labourers to work sincerely and perfectly, they are sufficient to showcase her as an outstanding leader.

*36 Vayadhinile* by Rosshan Andrews is an empowering narrative of a middle-class, middle-aged woman that speaks volumes even today. It tells the story of a perpetually observant—some might even say subjugated—housewife who finds an inner closet that contains a 'You Go Girl!' T-shirt. Vasanthi, the protagonist, is a married woman who finds her true self and becomes an achiever after taking up her desire that was on hold for the sake of her spouse and daughter. The themes like women abandoning their aspirations after marriage, the need for organic farming, and the idea that age is a barrier to achievement are all undeniable.

Vasanthi's confidence is reflected significantly in the YouTube video where she talks about her first unsuccessful meeting with the President of India. It also highlights the necessity for women to be active in social media to create societal changes. Women would undoubtedly appreciate Vasanthi as the embodiment of good energy and vigour. Her leadership is reflected in the shots where she coordinates and encourages women around her to engage in organic farming on their terraces. *36 Vayadhinile* is originally the remake of the Malayalam movie, *How Old Are You*. The recent Tamil movie, *The Great Indian Kitchen* (2023) is also the remake of the Malayalam movie, *The Great Indian Kitchen* (2021). This reflects how Tamil cinema picks up women's empowerment as a significant entity in each of its endeavours.

Women exhibit great leadership skills like men. But they are still undervalued and put into so many crises in their authority. This needs to be changed, and the media is a powerful weapon that can bring about this change. As media influences people directly, the portrayal of female leadership in films indeed acts as a catalyst for societal change. Tamil cinema has rendered women in a great position for the past decade, especially in its portrayal of female leads as successful leaders. The characters, Mathivadhani IAS in *Aramm*, Vasandhi in *36 Vayadhinile*, Geetha Rani in *Ratchasi*, and Bommi in *Soorarai Pottru* challenge the existing stereotypes regarding women's leadership. The portrayal of these characters affirms strongly that women can be as phenomenal leaders as men. This emerging trend in Tamil cinema of portraying women in leadership roles is a sign of societal progress which is yet to reach great heights in the days to come. Metamorphosis is a law of nature, and filmographic metamorphosis has become the law of Tamil cinema as it explores new things and adapts itself to the social milieu of its time. The filmographic metamorphosis, from ignoring the position of women in society to portraying them in leadership roles is indeed an avenue for societal change.

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## **Exploration of the Psychological Effects in the Viewers and the Powerful Female Protagonist in 'Raatchasi'**

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### **Abstract**

The paper explores the complex psychological effects produced in the minds of the audience through the strong female protagonist in the context of the Tamil film 'Raatchasi'. The study aims to disentangle the layers of cognitive dissonance and the transformative power of breaking stereotypes in the audience through a thorough examination of various psychological concepts. The research delves into the impact of the film on mental schemas and its narrative resonance, highlighting its capacity to both challenge and mold societal perceptions. The examination explores the function of identification and empathy, showing how the characters facilitate emotional engagement and audience connection and also the movie's symbolic interactionism in the context of social transformation, clarifying how the story promotes group comprehension and subverts conventional wisdom. The study ultimately provides a nuanced understanding of the psychological impact of 'Raatchasi' on the audience by highlighting its significance in shaping perceptions, promoting empathy, and assisting in social transformation.

**Keywords:** Cognitive dissonance, narrative resonance, emotional engagement, symbolic interactionism, self-efficacy.

### **Introduction**

'Raatchasi', a compelling Tamil movie released in 2019, transcends the boundaries of traditional storytelling by delving into the psychological nuances of its lead character, Geetha Rani, played by Jyothika. Beyond its cinematic appeal, the film taps into psychological principles, shaping the audience's perception of women's strength and resilience. This article explores the psychological impact of 'Raatchasi' on the audience by portraying a strong woman protagonist. In the movie, a strong female lead defies social expectations and battles against deep-rooted stereotypes that are prevalent in the South-Indian government schools. In this context, the paper examines how cognitive dissonance challenges conventional wisdom and how it might affect society's collective mental models.

### **Cognitive Dissonance**

According to the Festinger theory of cognitive dissonance, people experience discomfort, become aware of the discrepancy, and become driven to find a means of making their beliefs and actions more consistent when they come across facts or behaviors that go against their personal beliefs (*Cognitive dissonance of Leon Festinger*).

Psychologically, 'Raatchasi' engages the audience through cognitive dissonance, challenging preconceived notions about women's roles. Geetha Rani's character disrupts stereotypes of a traditional notion of a school headmistress and creates a cognitive dissonance that prompts viewers to reevaluate their beliefs. This psychological tension fosters a more open-minded approach, encouraging a shift in societal perspectives regarding the capabilities and strengths of women.

In the film, Geetha Rani scrutinizes and figures out the state of chaos that the school, the teachers, and the students are in. After grasping it, she rings the bell fiercely due to which all students and teachers assemble just as they gather for prayer. Then she introduces herself as the Headmistress of the school and reinforces the new changes along with the school rules. Most of the viewers would not have seen or heard about such a behaviour of a headmistress. Geetha Rani is portrayed in a way that no one would ever think of. She rang the bell even while the classes were going on and she did not hesitate to do so. She introduced herself and directly with no delay she put forth her expectations and the changes that had to be done in the school that was assigned to her. This serves as an instance in which she breaks open the shell of stereotypes and manages to accomplish what is right without procrastinating.

I am Geetha Rani!

From this moment, I'm the Head Master of this school.

Everyone should be inside the school before 9 am.

At 09:05 am, the school gate will be locked.

No one should jump over the walls.

No one should step inside the school without uniform.

...

6 teachers who have signed the ledger but are not inside the school...

file a Police complaint against them.

I'll recommend suspension.

School should remain as a school...

And teachers should be there for students. ( 9:49 - 10:39 )

Geetha Rani comes to school by auto and the audience could witness the auto driver's bewail and comment about the school teachers and students. He says "Government schools are usually worse but this school to which Geetha Rani is travelling is the worst of all. The teachers lack the sense of time and discipline, and the students are to be seen gathering in groups and fighting in the name of caste." (4:18-27)

From this, the audience can perceive the school's situation and state in which Geetha Rani, undertaking charge as the Headmistress sets forth the sedimentary layer of rules through which teachers and students are distilled. Commonly, no headmistress would react in such a way. This results in cognitive dissonance in the minds of the viewers. The sudden contradictory behaviour of the headmistress against their preconceived notion disturbs the viewers' mental schema and kindles them to cope with the sudden change in the notion of portraying female characters. Through several movies, the viewers are being fed with only male strong characters and associate strength only with a male. Thus, the aspect of cognitive dissonance in the movie is highlighted.

### **Identification and Empathy**

The film capitalizes on psychological principles of identification and empathy, creating a character in Geetha Rani that resonates with the audience. Viewers identify with her struggles, aspirations, and the challenges she faces, fostering a deep sense of empathy. As the audience is emotionally invested in Geetha's journey, the film becomes a psychological catalyst for empowering narratives and societal change. "Geetha Rani: You're a hero only if you achieve more than what your father offers. If not a zero!" (25:42).

When Geetha Rani identifies the character of the son of a local politician and punishes him, she faces threats from them in return. She was even threatened to be killed. She did not react as how most of the female characters are portrayed in Tamil movies, rather she reacted fearlessly in front of the student and his father. She pointed out that enjoying a father's property and money never makes the son a hero but, when he surpasses his father in everything and attains a respectable position in society the son becomes a hero. This act of hers provoked the student and gradually he turned into a student with good ethics and character. Usually, empathy is considering a person's situation and reacting accordingly so that it does not offend them. But Geetha Rani served as an example to show empathy even with fearless strength. Her way of dealing with empathy to people like them is so powerful and can be comprehended as 'empowered empathy'. Through this, the viewers learn a new perspective of practicing empathy.

### **Narrative Resonance**

The emotional, thematic, or symbolic effect a story has on its audience is referred to as narrative resonance. A story can affect people deeply and meaningfully, creating an enduring impression that goes beyond the moment of watching the story (*Narrative Resonance and Resilient Ideas: Christian Baden Interview*). 'Raatchasi' strategically aligns with viewers' mental schemas, challenging and reshaping existing cognitive frameworks. Geetha Rani's character becomes a positive example, altering perceptions of women's roles within the societal framework.

This narrative resonance stimulates cognitive restructuring, influencing the way audiences perceive and understand the strength and agency of women in real life.

To establish a narrative resonance, the movie makes use of strong storytelling strategies. Through engaging storytelling, compelling character arcs, and thought-provoking scenes, the audience is encouraged to question the prevailing societal stereotypes and norms. Throughout the film, many thought-provoking scenes stimulate the thoughts of the human mind that lead to being rational.

An example of a scene in the film that stood out was when the students were brawling and tussling in the name of 'caste'. Geetha Rani found her way to bring the fight to a halt but the Math teacher of the school denied it when he was suggested to stop the fight. Instead, he said the issue is a 'Sensitive Matter' and he cannot be involved in such affairs as his safety is put into question. Geetha also learned that the boys were in two groups with two caste colour bands in their hands. The following lines are Geetha Rani's words of response to the Math teacher.

Geetha Rani: It's not my duty to provide you protection. If you're scared then don't get out of your houses. Who knows the roof might fall on your head.

First page of every book states, encouraging haptic is a crime. Seems like you guys have never gone through that. (01: 06: 25 - 01: 07: 20)

Despite the Math teacher's refusal, Geetha Rani held her ground and defended the popular statement which is present on the first page of every school book. She also articulated the statement and further added that the teachers have never taught such subject matter to the students. Later, she also extracts the caste bands from the hands of the students and puts them on fire. By questioning prevailing stereotypes in the community and the educational system, 'Raatchasi' disrupts preexisting mental schema. The movie makes room for progressive ideas and cultural transformation by reshaping mental schemas.

### **Symbolic Interactionism in Social Change**

A micro-level theory called symbolic interactionism concentrates on the meanings associated with symbols and verbal and nonverbal human interaction (Learning *Introduction to Sociology*). Symbolic interactionism is evident in 'Raatchasi' as the film depicts Geetha Rani as a symbol of change within the educational system. Through her interactions with others and the symbolic representation of her struggles, the film becomes a powerful agent for social change. Viewers internalize these symbols, contributing to a collective psychological shift towards empowering women in various domains.

Geetha Rani was a pillar of support, a symbol of change, and an epitome of empowerment throughout the film, 'Raatchasi.' The film's last dialogue and her words at the end of the film are as follows:

Geetha Rani: Just speaking about the injustice...but not putting an end to it... instead, keep along with it... become a part of the injustice.

But who oppose them... they become 'History.' (02:09: 18 -32)

She always stood for truth and justice, paving the way for future generations by shaping and guiding the students. As the above-mentioned words elucidated the person who opposes injustice becomes 'history,' likewise the character, Geetha Rani earned a concrete spot in the minds of the other protagonists in the film and the audience as well.

Apart from the change in the educational system, Geetha Rani also served as a symbol of change in the minds of people and society. One incident where the particular stereotype of women being neglected in graveyards was broken by Geetha Rani. This could be witnessed by the audience when Geetha Rani goes to the graveyard with a garland for the funeral of her father, where a cremator man barricades her, denying her entry as she is a woman. But she just stares at him, tells him to move aside, walks past him, and pays her tribute to her father.

One other female protagonist in the film also serves as a symbol of change in the educational system. This particular protagonist is a handicapped woman who teaches Social Science to the students. In one incident, when the Collector comes to the school for inspection, he finds this particular female staff to be seated, yelling and using a cane at students. But when he stood by the window and watched her class, he noticed that the staff was not yelling instead she was sitting in the middle while the students gathered around her in a circle, and front of her, there was the map of India drawn on the floor. She was engaging the students in a lively manner, giving the cane to a particular student each time and asking their choice or mode of travel to Delhi. At first one male student got the cane and travelled by plane but instead of Delhi, he landed in Chandigarh, and later a female student chose the train to be her mode and landed accurately in Delhi. The teacher appreciated her and asked the students to applaud, insisting that the girl children win mostly. The collector also learns that the female staff is handicapped and tells her to sit and continue her class. Thus, women can be empowered in various domains and Geetha Rani in the film, served as a symbol of change, also highlighting the theory of symbolic interactionism.



## Empowerment through Self-Efficacy

Geetha Rani's character embodies Bandura's concept of self-efficacy – the belief in one's ability to bring about change (Catherine Moore *Albert Bandura: Self-efficacy & agentic positive psychology*). The film strategically portrays her overcoming challenges, instilling a sense of empowerment in the audience. Witnessing Geetha's journey fosters a psychological environment where viewers feel inspired to believe in their capacity for change and resilience.

Geetha Rani believes in herself and her capabilities to bring about changes in the educational system. She voluntarily withdraws herself from the Military and takes up the position of a Headmistress at a Government School in the Southern part of Tamil Nadu. When her higher official questions her choice of the Head Mistress and in particular considering her choice of working in an unknown place in the Southern part, to which she firmly answers, that is where she wants to work. Her appearance and gestures towards her official make it evident that she has decided to bring changes to those places and that firmness can be witnessed in her eyes.

One other scene that left an impression where Geetha's self-efficacy is evident at the market, where she encounters a vendor who is a parent of a school student. The vendor, after knowing that the lady was his child's Headmistress, gets back the tomatoes he sold to them. When Geetha blinks in wonder, he explains that the tomatoes won't last long and tells her to buy them from another vendor. She questions him about his loyalty to the buyers, but he refuses as he could make some money out of those tomatoes. Geetha, without any words, just stares at the vendor and he changes his mind.

Vendor: So, you're Geetha Teacher?

Geetha Rani: Yes.

...

Vendor: No tomatoes for you people. Find another shop.

(Geetha Rani and her father exchange looks wondering about the vendor's actions.)

Vendor: It's not that Teacher.

I never thought my son will pass through the exams... but you've made him clear 9th grade.

These tomatoes will last only for day, that's why I didn't sell it to you.

Geetha Rani: Fine! Is It fair to sell them to others?

Vendor: If I sell them, I'll make 5 bucks.

(Geetha Rani stares.)

Fine! I won't sell them. (50: 17 - 50: 66)

The audience could spot the self-efficacy of Geetha from the mentioned incident. She also changed the mindset of teachers at school who were lethargic, and not punctual to school, and likewise before she arrived at the school. One instance that further proves her self-efficacy was when she instilled the capability of the Math teacher for a poetry competition. Usually, poetry is associated with languages, but she assigns the task to a Math teacher challenging his capacity. She also says that the school has never won so far in such competitions and assigning the task to a Math teacher is of no loss even if they lose in the competition. But the Math teacher who has taken up the charge to guide students for the competitions, encourages the students, pushing aside their fear, and showers words of magnetism that bring in the confidence that the students lacked so far. Eventually, the students win the competition and it is not the victory of the students or the Math teacher alone, it is the victory of Geetha's self-efficacy.

The film by portraying such a strong female personality with self-efficacy has parallelly illuminated the wick of self-efficacy and capacity in the audience as well.

### **Summation**

In conclusion, "Raatchasi" is a potent catalyst for social change that goes beyond traditional storytelling by incorporating psychological concepts. The character of Geetha Rani defies stereotypes, cultivating empathy and identification, conforming to mental schemas, and embodying symbolic interactionism. The movie serves as a medium for a psychological revolution in society, challenging audiences to reevaluate gender expectations and honor women's strength. Cinema has a powerful effect on the collective consciousness, as demonstrated by 'Raatchasi', which not only entertains but also contributes to a transformative societal narrative through its empowering archetype.

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## **Intersectional Feminism in the South Indian Biopic *Abhinetri* – A Critical Perspective**

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### **Abstract**

American Professor “Kimberle Crenshaw coined the word “Intersectionality” in the year 1989, to explain how various human qualities including race, class, gender, and other factors overlap and intersect. Intersectionality emphasizes that people have numerous identities and a mix of these identities often shapes their encounters with prejudice. Intersectional feminism is a sub-genre of feminism that recognizes all women’s unique identities and experiences while also acknowledging, all kinds of oppressions that intersect. The ultimate objective is to create social and political fairness by tackling class, gender, racism, sexual orientation, creed, ability, and age disparities. This approach also tries to question the standard narrative of feminism by acknowledging the specific experiences of marginalized women, who often confront many types of oppression as a result of their intersecting identities. Though it began as a movement to investigate female oppression, intersectionality has been criticized for being too broad, with its emphasis on subjective experiences making it difficult to find the common roots of oppression. However, intersectional feminism continues to inspire and guide various social justice initiatives. The Kannada biographical film “Abhinetri” is investigated to study the progression of women’s representation in Indian cinema, notably in women-centric biopics. The film is about the life of Sarat Latha, often known as Nanda, a well-known person in Kannada cinema. The story of Sarat Latha and Nanda, who died of despair, highlights the presence of mental health difficulties. These cases demonstrate the serious consequences of gender-based violence on women’s overall well-being and mental health. “Abhinetri” is an entertaining narrative that supports women's equality and revolutionary reforms in a male-dominated world of filmmaking.

**Keywords:** Intersectionality, film, gender, biopic, south Indian films, *Abhinetri*, women biopics

### **Introduction**

Intersectionality is a broad framework that seeks to understand how various marginalized identities, such as disability, race, class, gender, and sexuality, are interconnected, and how these overlapping oppressive structures disproportionately affect certain vulnerable segments of society. The word was developed by African-American legal scholar and social theorist Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, and intersectional feminism is an essential idea that recognizes that not all women experience the same challenges.

Intersectional feminism investigates how many types of discrimination, such as race, class, disability, gender, religion, creed, age, and sexual orientation, affect marginalized people and communities.

In India, these identities are regarded to have a significant influence on the patriarchal structure of the context in which women live. Manusmriti, a prominent authority on social behaviour in Indian civilization, insists that a young girl should begin to follow her father's direction. This is seen in the typical roles for women presented in both Indian commercial movies and biopics about female achievements.

This paper seeks to evaluate the interrelation between various intersectional factors and the way they contribute to the portrayal of female characters within the women biopic *Abhinetri*.

The critical lenses of intersectionality will be utilized to investigate how these aspects impact the depiction of the women protagonist in *Abhinetri*. The repercussions of intersecting identities are many, and assessing how gender, religion, caste, age, education, career, and wealth influence narrative, character development, and gender representation in film may offer a more complete picture of a person's experiences. This information may be used to promote social and political equality by acknowledging the diversity in people's experiences and addressing the specific needs of marginalized persons.

### **Intersectionality in the Film *Abhinetri***

*Abhinetri* is a biographical South Indian Kannada movie about the late actress Minuguthare Kalpana and her inspirational story of becoming a popular actress in the male-dominated film industry while undergoing all the hurdles and hardships in the industry.

The movie has 06 female characters, each with their unique traits, as highlighted in the accompanying table.

S. No	Character	Character Traits
01	Sarat Latha / Nanda (Main Lead)	Stubborn,Determined,Focused,Talented,Dominative,Bold, Fighter, CareTaker, Emotional,Depressed, Selfish, Egoistic, Sensitive.
02.	Drama Actress (Rehearsal)	Stage Fear, Forgetful, Egoistic
03.	Keerthi (Artist)	Flexible, Talented, Friendly
04.	Chinamma	Friendly, Caretaking, Loving, Helping
05.	Sarat Latha Mother	Friendly, Caretaking, Loving
06.	Damayanti (Artist)	Friendly

A biographical film is focused on the main lead character of the film. Therefore, my analysis will focus on the primary characters of the cinematic work Sarat Latha and Nanda in the biopic “Abhinetri”.

The factors that influenced the representation of the character Sarat Latha / Nanda in the biopic “Abhinetri” are as follows:

S. No	Factor	S. No	Factor
01	Gender	05	Income
02	Occupation	06	Geographic Location
03	Family / Marital Status	07	Mental Health
04	Physical Appearance		

### **Power Relation / Intersections Formed in the Biopic *Abhinetri* (2015)**

#### **1. Gender**

S. No	Power Relation / Intersections Formed in the Biopic <i>Abhinetri</i> (2015)
01	Gender, Occupation, Family/Marital Status
02	Gender, Physical Appearance, Income
03	Gender, Geographic Location, Mental Health
04	Gender, Family/Marital Status, Mental Health
05	Gender, Occupation, Mental Health
06	Gender, Physical Appearance, Mental Health
07	Gender, Family/Marital Status, Income
08	Occupation, Physical Appearance, Income
09	Occupation, Geographic Location, Mental Health
10	Family/Marital Status, Physical Appearance, Income
11	Family/Marital Status, Geographic Location, Mental Health

The biopic focuses on the pervasive maltreatment of women in the film industry. The heroine, Sarat Latha, is exploited by individuals who advise utilizing her body for fame, and she endures vulgar remarks from the audience watching her stage performance. Her father's disdain for household obligations reinforces masculine domination. Despite giving acting prospects, Krishna Raju intends to sexually exploit Sarat Latha.

Another character, Nanda, confronts industry blowback for expressing herself and exposing institutional misogyny. These examples highlight the systemic misogyny and exploitation that women face in the entertainment industry.

## **2. Occupation**

Sarat Latha is treated disrespectfully by the owner of a drama company, discriminated against by an actress, and disrespected by a production boy, demonstrating the industry's propensity to undervalue women. Nanda faces exploitation from a filmmaker, criticism for resisting advances, and objectification from journalist Ramji, demonstrating persistent misogyny. Ramji's patronizing attitude, as well as Nanda's candidature for a Russian award, highlight the difficulties that women confront, regardless of their aptitude. Overall, it demonstrates the prevalent sexism and discrimination experienced by women in the male-dominated film business.

## **3. Marital Status & Family Status**

The marital and family status looks at Sarat Latha and Nanda's family relationships before and after marriage:

Sarat Latha's lower-middle-class family suffered financially before she became a popular actress, with her mother encouraging her acting ambitions while her father opposed them, indicating male domination. Despite financial help, Nanda's family shows ingratitude, and her yearning for marriage is greeted with apathy. Despite family resistance, Sarat Latha becomes a celebrity.

Following her marriage to Ganga Raju, Nanda exhibits dominance and expects compliance while displaying her pride. Their relationship deteriorates into quarrels and separation, revealing intricate power dynamics. Overall, Sarat Latha and Nanda's characters experience issues of domination, striving, and family ties.

## **4. Physical Appearance**

Sarat Latha's troubles in acquiring roles in films are ascribed to her PR's perception of her unappealing looks, which led her to do a provocative dance. Despite her desire to perform, she is turned down because of her looks, illustrating the industry's reliance on beauty above skill.

Nanda gets aid from journalist Ramji, who advises her on how to improve her look to gain more possibilities.

Her worries about society's judgments, as well as her focus on beauty, highlight the pressures that actors experience to meet specific standards.

Overall, it emphasizes the prevalence of physical attractiveness in the cinema business, affecting the careers and self-esteem of actors such as Sarat Latha and Nanda.

## **5. Mental Health**

The investigation of the protagonist's mental health captures Nanda's rocky career in the film business, defined by mental health issues and evolving attitudes:

Nanda is subjected to rigorous treatment during film shootings, which causes melancholy and a lack of confidence. The failure of her film exacerbates her mental health concerns, causing financial difficulties and a tarnished image.

Despite his burgeoning prominence, Nanda's ego and power grow, resulting in confrontations and unpredictable conduct. Her obsession with a love interest damages her mental health, ending in suicidal thoughts. Nanda's incapacity to deal with rejection and abandonment eventually causes her to make the heartbreaking choice to commit herself.

Overall, it emphasizes the negative impact of professional demands and personal ties on Nanda's mental health.

## **Conclusion**

The film "Abhinetri" is a dramatic depiction of the difficulties women encounter in the entertainment business, putting attention on the significant influence of gender dynamics on its characters, Sarat Latha and Nanda. Sarat Latha's experience with exploitation and objectification emphasizes the persistent abuse of women in male-dominated industries, where they are often treated purely as objects for personal benefit. The insulting remarks made by a male audience member during Sarat Latha's performance highlight the objectification problem and demonstrate women's devaluation in the business. The film also emphasizes the importance of family connections in showing male tyranny, as seen by Sarat Latha's father's efforts to manage her profession and Ganga Raju's sexual exploitation despite familial estrangement.

The mistreatment by people like Krishna Raju and the director emphasizes the ubiquity of sexual exploitation, while rumours made by male artists highlight the difficulties that outspoken women encounter.

Sarat Latha and Nanda's experiences, which included financial challenges and appearance prejudice, demonstrate the psychological toll of gender-based violence. Finally, "Abhinetri" calls for women's equality and radical change in the mostly male-dominated film industry in India.

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## Unraveling the Traditional Norms in *36Vayathinile* and *Magalir Mattum*

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### Abstract

Tamil cinema is the part of Indian cinema associated with the production of motion pictures in the Tamil language vividly spoken in the state of Tamil Nadu. It is otherwise known as Kollywood. It is a diverse landscape and has produced many iconic and popular films in India. The culture of Tamil Nadu has placed a strong emphasis on family and community, and this is reflected in Kollywood. There are many themes in Kollywood like romance, social issues, Revenge, supernatural, women empowerment, comedy, etc. which the movies deal with. Women are also given equal roles to male actors. Both working women and domestic workers face a lot of discrimination in the present society. Women give a lot of ideas for the development of the society. But they are not given importance. The ideas given by males are taken into consideration in the case of present society. This research paper deals with the subjugation of women in the south Indian families. The movies taken into the study are *36 Vayathinile* and *Magalir Mattum*. These movies portray the social issues in the workplace as well as the home. Women should be given equal respect as men everywhere.

**Keywords:** Kollywood, Tamil cinema, women empowerment

Tamil cinema is the segment of Indian cinema attributed to the production of motion pictures widely used in the state of Tamil Nadu. It is otherwise known as Kollywood a portmanteau of the name Kodambakkam which is a place in Chennai and Hollywood. *Keecha Vadham* was the first Tamil silent film directed by R. Nataraja Mudaliar in 1918. *Kalidas* the first Tamil talking film which is multilingual and directed by H.M.Reddy was released on 31 October 1939.

By the close of the 1930s, the Entertainment Tax Act of 1939 was passed by the legislature of the state of Madras. The Tamil film industry established in Madras became a secondary hub for the Bombay-based Hindi cinema and a primary hub for other South Indian film industries and Sri Lankan cinema. Over the last quarter of the 20th century, there was a global presence of Tamil films.

The women characters in Tamil cinema are diverse and have evolved over the years reflecting changes in cultural attitudes, societal norms, and the overall film industry. In the early years of Tamil cinema, female characters were shown as either virtuous or traditional. The actresses named T.P. Rajalakshmi and M.S.Sathyamurthy played major roles in the silent and early talking era.

Female characters played supporting roles and the themes of the films revolved around family, morality, and social issues. Strong female roles first appeared in the 1950s and 60s, represented by actors like P. Bhanumathi, Savithri, and Vyjayanthi Mala.

These females weren't limited to stereotypical roles, and they could carry entire films on their shoulders.

During this time, certain movies started to explore social themes including women's rights. The way that women were portrayed in Tamil cinema changed in the 1970s and 80s. Actresses who played more contemporary and autonomous roles were Suhasini, Radhika, and Sridevi. During this time, "heroine-centric" films started to appear more frequently.

Actresses who defied conventional stereotypes were Revathi, Kushboo, and Meena. Movies began to examine issues such as women's empowerment and the obstacles women confront in society. The 1990s also saw a surge of women-focused movies that followed the journey of the lead female character. Prominent actresses who portrayed strong personalities and who took on a variety of roles in Tamil cinema include Jyothika, Simran, and Trisha.

The movie *Magalir Mattum* centers on the character Sathya. She works in a fashion export company. There are many discriminations in the workplace. The manager flirts with the women and treats them badly in the workplace. He makes them do his work too. She makes the woman employee Janaki buy a saree for his wife.

Sathya fights for her two friends and the entire women in the workplace. Few women characters like Janaki and Papamma face subjugation. Janaki is a typical Brahmin and is the personal assistant to the manager. But the manager asks her to prepare coffee for him regularly. It is none of her business. But Janaki does it regularly.

A woman employee named Madhavi supports the manager. She ill-treats the entire women in the company. She steals a file from Janaki and puts it in her drawer. But Sathya helps her to retrieve it. She is a woman of sheer faith and confidence. She helps her two friends in the entire movie. She comes up with a lot of new ideas for the company.

The ideas of Sathya are not encouraged by the manager. She brings the idea of a kid's playroom to the company. The women can take care of the kids and also work beside them. But the manager rejects the idea. But Sathya creates a plan and succeeds in the end. Everybody has their lunch in the upstairs. The Sathya creates a room for them in the end.

The manager asks three of them to stay with him in the guesthouse. He had bad intentions for them. Sathya cleverly creates a plan. They lock the manager in the guesthouse. They buy a lot of electric items and lock him with them. Now Sathya has become the manager of the company. She executes her idea, and all the kids are brought to the company. They play in the playroom. All the mothers in the company are very overwhelmed. She also designs many new garments.

The company goes on with a good profit. She gets many new clients for the company. The CEO of the company also encourages her for new ideas. It is only because of Sathya's effort the company reached a high position.

The movie *36 Vayathinile* centers on the character Jyothika. She is a homemaker at the beginning of the movie. The movie is about the transformation of Jyothika from a homemaker to a businesswoman. She grows vegetables on the top floor. Later she develops into a garden. Then she tries to create it into a business. But her business proposal is being rejected by the family. None of the family members support her.

Society supports new ideas, but it should come handily from the male. Women also have large ideas. But it is not supported in the society. The rejection of a new idea by the own family members is terrible. Even her husband doesn't encourage her. But Jyothika is a strong woman. She fights for her rights. She consoles everyone in the family. Later, she becomes a businesswoman.

She faced a lot of discrimination and plans to quit the business. She was supported by her college friend. Jyothika was a strong woman in her college days. She protested against the dress code in the college. The protest was successful, and the management allowed modern dress in the college. Her friend reminded her of that and boosted Jyothika.

Jyothika is also being supported by an old lady outside her home. The old woman helps her to get a business deal. She must supply vegetables for a marriage function. She is a determined woman who comes out with new ideas. She makes another woman also to develop a farm upstairs. Everybody brings a lot of vegetables in the end. Jyothika collects them and supplies them to the marriage function. Though She had a lot of discrimination in the early days, she can achieve in the end.

Jyothika faced a lot of struggles in the workplace too. But her sheer faith and confidence made her to be successful in the end. Many women characters in the movie supported her a lot. They were also the other reason for her to achieve. Her family members supported her in the end. She transformed into a big businesswoman. Her daughter was proud of her.

Women-focused movies become more and more popular, tackling topics including professional goals, education, and gender equality. The diversity of female roles in Tamil cinema has increased in the 2020s. Actresses who continue to defy preconceptions include Nayanthara, Keerthy Suresh, and Aishwarya Rajesh. A greater variety of topics are being covered in films, such as women's relationships, mental health, and cultural expectations.

Overall, the portrayal of women characters in Tamil cinema has evolved from traditional stereotypes to more nuanced and realistic representations. While progress has been made, there is ongoing discussion about the need for even more diverse and empowering roles for women in the industry. Both the above movies are about the leading protagonists Revathi and Jyothika.

They overcome their subjugations by their willpower. Also, they have a lot of new ideas in their mind. Though they face opposition in the beginning they achieve in the end. They are supported by their friends in the workplace. They emerge as a successful woman both at home and in their workplace. Women can do multiple roles. And it is very evident in both the cases. Women should be given equal importance to men in the current society. If given so they would achieve great things in this modern generation. The above protagonists are a good example.

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## **Beyond the Reel: A Psychological Inquiry into Impactful Women Characters in Tamil Cinema and their Transformative Influence on Real-World Dynamics**

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### **Introduction**

Aristotle defined that the poet is “to speak not of events which have occurred, but the kind of events which could occur, and are possible by the standards of probability and necessity” (Aristotle, 1988). The storylines in most movies are considered to shape how humans perceive the world and themselves and there has stereotypes and the underrepresentation of women and minorities are matters of concern (Appel & Richter, 2007). In themes of media, Women are under-presented, which wrongly directs that men are to be cultural standard and women are exhibited as unimportant and invisible and also has a stereotypical way to reflect the gender roles (Wood, 2003). When we consider talking about Tamil cinema, there are a lot of stereotypical representations of women characters but also women-centric movies which pave the way to a different view on women breaking the stigma, and women characters are not only the supporting characters for the male lead character. In such instances, women in the real world tend to have a perspective of the transformation of strong and independent women. For more than years, women have been portrayed for their beauty and the physical characteristics used as charming icons, but more than that women possess strong determination, ambition, and striving to attain their life goals. As a woman in real life, most women are truly inspiring, which are now portrayed in the movies with women-centric stories. In some instances, this portrayal could be said to be a lack of women in the media because of the scarcity of women in charge of media, even though women have many roles in media when we consider in the American Film industry there is only about 5% of television, writers, executives, and producers are women (Wood, 2003). Likewise in the Tamil Film industry, there are a lot of writers, producers, and directors, yet the most powerful women-centric is still in less count.

### **Portrayal of Women in Tamil Cinema**

India is considered to be the second most popular country in the world, where India has a huge strong women population as both in urban and rural areas women are proving their immense and huge progress in various professions (Raju, 2022). In the context of Tamil culture lot of writings glorify the beauty and elegance of women at the same time kinds of literature in Tamil never failed to showcase the strong and determined women characters, Likewise Tamil movies should not dwell around the stereotypical view and representation of women.

In Tamil Cinema, movies have the greatest influence on people as they take it personally and connect with the character.

### **Stereotypical Portrayal of Women in Media (Wood, 2003)**

Some of the stereotypical portrayals of women in American cinema are also seen in Tamil movies, where most of these are associated with real-life scenarios

- Women's dependence
- Women's incompetence
- Women as caregivers and men as breadwinners
- Women as sex objects
- Normalizing violence against women

### **Women in Kollywood**

Tamil cinema notably shared a place in sharing a Pan Indian Film making industry and also on the other hand has Women in the film industry peaked to success in their films (Balagobalan & Raguram, 2018). The expectations from the audience were high for the women-centric films and also audience mostly tended to connect with the character which paved the way for the transformation of their life too. The simple notion of Real life being portrayed in movies is in turn works as reel-life women's transformation stories which are scripted bringing a change in women in real life.

Operational definitions by researchers to explain the portrayal of women in Tamil cinema (Balagobalan & Raguram, 2018)

### **Subordinate Role Function (Lead Actress Role Defined about Male Lead)**

- The protagonist's mother
- Protagonist's wife
- Love interest of the male protagonist/girlfriend
- Aids male protagonist to achieve his goal
- Screen time less than the male lead

### **Alternative Role Function**

- Vamp/courtesan dancer
- Night club dancer/bar dancer/cabaret dancer
- Prostitute/call girl

### **Role of Women Characters**

- Social activist
- Singer
- Fiancé
- Working women
- Athletic/Nonathletic
- TV actress
- Patriot
- Other Costumes

### **Traditional as per the Reference to the Tamil**

- Culture
- Non-traditional
- Traditional + Non traditional

### **The Family Ahead of Self**

- Compromises personal interests at least on one
- occasion for the sake of family
- Willing to put spouse/male protagonist ahead of her interests
- Non-rebellious to established customs/social patterns
- Sacrifices for the sake of family honour/ family's social status

### **Career Orientation**

- Homemaker: Takes care of children, Takes care of in-laws
- Performs household chores
- Lives in a joint family
- No specific mention was made of her career interests

### **Purity/Chastity**

- Never had a pre-marital affair/never has more than one lover in the movie
- Portrayed as following customs and rituals of her respective religion
- Always conforms to set traditional values
- About marriage, prayer, religion, rituals
- Pious/devoted

### **Very Religious/God Fearing**

- Shown as performing religious rites/offering prayers in the “Puja” (prayer)room/temple

### **Symbolism of Virtue (Presence on Screen)**

- Does not smoke
- Does not drink alcohol
- Non-flirtatious
- Not highly interactive with men (except her family or her love interest)
- Does not make sexual advancements
- Does not appear in an ‘item’ number (a cabaret dance, a night club dance)
- Appears in traditional Indian costumes for the majority of her role screen time

### **Symbolism of Non-Virtue**

- Smoking
- Drinking alcohol
- Sexual advertisements
- Kidnapping & using drugs

### **Languages/ Wording Used by Woman Characters**

- Good
- Vulgar
- Abusing
- Mutual

### **Economic Status**

- Rich
- Middle
- Poor
- Not mention

### **Living Style**

- Marital
- Single
- Engaged
- Live in relationship
- Widow



## Methodology

This study is to analyze the “Portrayal of Women in Tamil Cinema and their psychological impact in transformative influence in real life dynamics” through a female-centric movie of seven different works. Those are Katrin Mozhi – directed by Radha Mohan (2018), 36 Vayathinile – Rosshan Andrrews (2015), Kanna - Aishwarya Rajinikanth (2022), Irudhi Suttru – Sudha Kongra (2016), Ratchasi – Gowthamraj (2019), Aruvi – Arun Prabhu Purushothaman (2016), Aramm – Gopi Nainar (2017), Ponmagal Vandhal – J.J. Fedrick (2020).

The analysis of the above films dealt with the connection with real life and the psychological viewpoint where they have been portrayed. There is a sense of psychological connection between the character and the audience, which in turn makes the audience act back in the same way.

## Research Design

This research adopts a qualitative approach to understanding the portrayal of women in Tamil cinema and its psychological impact on real-life dynamics. The focus is on exploring the nuances and subtleties through in-depth observation of a female-centric movie.

## Selection of Film

**Inclusion Criteria:** Selecting a female-centric movie produced in the Tamil film industry that prominently features a female lead character.

**Exclusion Criteria:** Movies with minimal female representation or those primarily driven by male characters will be excluded.

## Sampling

**Purposive Sampling:** The movie is selected based on its popularity, critical acclaim, and relevance to the portrayal of women in Tamil cinema. The goal is to choose a film that has a significant impact on the audience.

## Data Collection

**Film Viewing:** The view of the selected film multiple times to thoroughly analyze the psychological elements embedded into the character with the various aspects of considering dialogue delivery, character development, screen time, and interactions among characters.

**Observational Notes:** Detailed observational notes were taken during each viewing, capturing expressions, body language, and contextual elements related to the portrayal of female characters.

## Coding and Categorization

**Thematic Analysis:** Coding is conducted to identify recurring themes related to the portrayal of women. These themes include the psychological elements involved with traditional roles, character complexity, and the influence on societal perceptions.

**Categorization:** Data is categorized into specific aspects such as role functions, character traits, symbolism, and socio-cultural implications for identifying the psychological elements within the character.

## Psychological Impact Analysis

**Expert Consultation and Theory Considerations:** The analysis is consulted with experts and compared with psychological theories and concepts to analyze the potential psychological impact of the identified themes.

## Data Analysis

**Constant Comparative Analysis:** Data is analyzed using constant comparative analysis to identify patterns and relationships within the observed themes.

**Triangulation:** Professionals and students with experience in the field independently analyse the data to enhance reliability and reduce researcher bias.

## Results and Discussion

### Self-Discovery and Empowerment

This theme revolves around characters finding their true selves, understanding their strengths and weaknesses, and ultimately gaining a sense of empowerment. It often involves personal growth, self-reflection, and overcoming obstacles to become more authentic and confident individuals.

In "*Katrin Mozhi*," Vijayalakshmi, portrayed by Jyothika, undergoes a transformative journey of self-discovery when she takes up a job as a radio jockey. The theme is powerfully portrayed as she breaks free from societal expectations, discovering her passion and unleashing her potential. Similar narratives of self-discovery are evident in "*36 Vayathinile*," "*Aruvi*," and "*Ponmagal Vanthal*," where the female protagonists redefine their identities beyond traditional roles, inspiring real-life women to embrace their authenticity and pursue their aspirations.

## **Resilience in the Face of Adversity**

Resilience emphasizes the ability of individuals to bounce back from challenging situations. Characters may face setbacks, trauma, or hardship, but their resilience enables them to persevere and even thrive despite adversity.

The movies "*Kanaa*," "*Irudhi Suttru*," "*Ratchasi*," and "*Ponmagal Vanthal*" portray resilient female characters who overcome societal norms and personal challenges. Whether it's a young aspiring cricketer facing gender biases, a boxer fighting against corruption, or a lawyer seeking justice, these characters exhibit strength and determination. This theme resonates with real-life dynamics, encouraging women to confront adversities with resilience and courage.

## **Breaking Stereotypes in Professions**

This theme challenges traditional expectations and gender or societal stereotypes associated with certain professions. Characters may pursue careers or roles typically considered unconventional for their gender, race, or background, promoting a broader, more inclusive perspective on professions.

In the movie "*Kanaa*," where Aishwarya Rajesh challenges the norms associated with women in sports. Similarly, "*Irudhi Suttru*" challenges gender stereotypes in boxing, and "*Ratchasi*" challenges norms in the education sector. These narratives inspire real-life women to pursue their passions and careers irrespective of societal expectations, fostering a paradigm shift in perceptions.

## **Educational Empowerment and Social Change**

Educational and empowerment social change often focuses on characters who work towards transforming societal norms through education and empowerment initiatives. This theme emphasizes the impact of knowledge and empowerment in driving positive social change.

In "*Ratchasi*," "*Kanaa*," and "*Ponmagal Vanthal*," the focus on education as a tool for empowerment and societal change is prominent. The characters, be it a headmistress, a young cricketer, or a lawyer, use education to challenge and transform their communities. This theme encourages women to value education as a means of personal growth and social impact, influencing real-life perceptions and priorities.

## **Justice and Advocacy**

Justice and advocacy themes centre on characters fighting for what they believe is right. Whether it's legal justice, social justice, or advocating for marginalized communities, these stories highlight the importance of standing up for principles and fighting against injustice.

The movies "*Ponmagal Vanthal*," "*Ratchasi*," and "*Aramm*" showcase women characters advocating for justice and standing against societal injustices. Whether it's a lawyer fighting for the wrongfully accused, an educator challenging systemic flaws, or a collector addressing a water crisis, these characters inspire real-life activism, motivating women to stand up for what is right and just.

### **Coping with Trauma and Mental Health**

This theme delves into the psychological aspects of characters who have experienced trauma or struggle with mental health issues. It often explores their journey toward healing, the support they receive, and the resilience required to cope with such challenges.

In "*Aruvi*," the titular character copes with immense trauma, offering a profound exploration of mental health. "*Irudhi Suttru*" also touches upon mental health challenges in the toughest situations. These narratives contribute to real-life discussions on mental well-being, reducing stigma, and emphasizing the importance of support systems for women facing such challenges.

### **Familial Relationships and Balancing Roles**

Stories featuring familial relationships often explore the dynamics within families and the challenges of balancing various roles. This theme can include the exploration of parental expectations, sibling relationships, and the impact of familial bonds on individual growth.

The movie "*Katrin Mozhi*," "*36 Vayathinile*," "*Ponmagal Vanthal*," and delve into the complexities of familial relationships, emphasizing the psychological impact of balancing multiple roles. Real-life women can relate to these themes, prompting discussions on gender roles, societal expectations, and the pursuit of a balanced life.

### **Courage to Challenge Norms**

This theme centers around characters who challenge societal norms, cultural expectations, or traditions. It emphasizes the courage required to question established norms and the potential positive impact that breaking free from conformity can have on individuals and communities.

The theme of challenging societal norms is central in "*Aruvi*," "*36 Vayathinile*," "*Kanaa*," and "*Ratchasi*." These films showcase women who defy expectations and norms, inspiring real-life transformations. The courage to challenge established norms fosters a sense of agency among women, encouraging them to question societal expectations and pave their paths.

## Themes Identified

<b>Movies</b>	<b>Common Themes</b>
<b><i>KatrinMozhi</i></b>	Self-Discovery and Empowerment, Familial Relationships Balancing Roles
<b><i>36Vayathinile</i></b>	Self-Discovery and empowerment Familial Relationships and Balancing Roles Courage to Challenge Norms
<b><i>Aruvi</i></b>	Self-Discovery and Empowerment Resilience in the Face of Adversity Coping with Trauma and Mental Health Courage to Challenge Norms
<b><i>Ponmagal Vanthal</i></b>	Self-Discovery and Empowerment Resilience in the Face of Adversity- Breaking Stereotypes in Professions

## Conclusion

Tamil cinema has exerted a profound impact on its audience, particularly in shaping perceptions of women through the portrayal of strong, women-centric characters on screen. Beyond the reel characters, the psychological elements embedded in these narratives play a pivotal role in conveying messages that resonate with the audience. The depiction of empowered female protagonists has not only challenged traditional gender norms but has also inspired real-world change. Through nuanced storytelling and character development, Tamil cinema has addressed societal issues such as gender inequality, domestic violence, and women's empowerment. The emotional depth and authenticity of these characters allow audiences, especially women, to connect with and internalize the struggles and triumphs portrayed on screen. The power of representation in Tamil cinema goes beyond entertainment, catalyzing social awareness and discourse. By weaving psychological elements into the narratives, filmmakers effectively communicate messages that transcend the screen, fostering a broader understanding of women's roles in society and encouraging a shift towards more equitable and progressive perspectives. In conclusion, Tamil cinema's impact on its audience, particularly in portraying women-centric characters, extends beyond the reel, influencing societal attitudes and contributing to a positive transformation in the perception of women in the real world.

## Limitations

- Single Film Focus: Limiting the study to particular films will restrict the generalizability of findings to other movies.
- Subjectivity: Despite efforts to minimize bias, interpretations will be influenced by individual perspectives.

## Future Implications

- The research can be carried out to identify the filmmaker's perspective and the reach to the audience
- The research can be further used to analyze the transformation in real-world dynamics
- The analysis of the use of psychological elements and exploration by the cinematic narratives and the audience perception could be assessed

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## **Interpreting Tamil Cinema and its Narratives: A Compendious Study of 'Women in a Man's World'**

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### **Abstract**

Tamil cinema's history dates back to 1897 when M. Edwards screened a few selected silent films all of which were non-fictional documentations of everyday life of the people that later evolved into black and white Talkies resulting in the eventual outcome of Colour Motion Pictures. Since the field of Tamil cinema is predominantly ruled over by male technicians and actors, the role of women in Tamil cinema has always been a matter of contention. Women played an indispensable part right from the outset, but it is their role and presence that engenders an enduring debate. It is the same Tamil Cinema that portrayed women as goddesses and objectified them as sex idols. One cannot say that there has been a gradual transition in the roles played by women in Tamil Cinema over the years. Even in the earlier years, women have played roles of significance, championing the cause of the underdogs and downtrodden. There was a phase when women only played stereotypical roles of a submissive housewife or they were cast as the love interest of the eponymous hero of the film. It was always the man's world in which she had been a part. Not very long after that, directors like K. Balachander, Balu Mahendra and Bharathiraja meticulously shaped narratives revolving around women. We were able to witness women who rebelled against and defied conventions; who were unapologetic and decisive. This study highlights the works of visionary directors and their portrayal of women characters over the years in the history of Tamil Cinema towards their liberty and empowerment.

**Keywords:** role of women, transition, stereotype, submissive, visionary, empowerment

### **Introduction**

The weak and unrealistic images of women in the long history of Cinema can be greatly attributed to the preponderance of men in the world of Cinema. Tamil Cinema is not an exception and has greatly influenced people, especially women by projecting women in a way the male-dominated society expects them to be. Tamil narratives portrayed women with fastidious care where their sole existence revolved around satisfying the conjugal needs of the partner, upbringing of the children, and managing the household chores. Young girls of the household were informed and insisted by other female members of the family to learn household chores which in turn could make them desirable for the institution called marriage.

Laura Mulvey in her collection of essays reflects that “Woman, then, stands in patriarchal culture as a signifier for the male other, bound by a symbolic order in which man can live out his fantasies and obsessions through linguistic command by imposing them on the silent image of a woman still tied to her place as the bearer of meaning, not the maker of meaning.” (*Visual and Other Pleasures*)

Women are still portrayed as objects of desire and over the years, Tamil film narratives have ingrained ideal beauty and body standards that are far from reality. Feminist film theory questions the function and role of women characters in the narratives. Most of the films written and created by men have showcased women as mere eye candy. “A man never begins by presenting himself as an individual of a certain sex; he is a man.” (Beauvoir) Female actors were made to play sensuous roles and were even cast just for erotic dance numbers clad in skimpy clothes to bewitch the male audience. On the other hand, in the films *Nattamai* and *Mannan*, educated women Meena and Shanthi Devi were portrayed as arrogant, domineering women who were ultimately put in their so-called places as wives. Antithetically, in *Aval Oru Thodar Kathai*, through the character Kavitha played by actress Sujatha, K. Balachander presents to the Tamil audience a strong-willed woman, who single-handedly takes care of the entire family after the death of her father. She becomes so engrossed in her work as the sole breadwinner of the family to the detriment of her love life. Kavitha who sacrifices her whole life for the benefit of every single member of her family is seen as an epitome of selflessness.

## **Objectives**

To understand and analyze the influence and impact of the ‘male gaze’ over the years in the art of filmmaking which indeed has shaped the construct of a family and the role of women in this construction.

To highlight the supremacy of visual media and its power in shifting the paradigm of the ‘ideal woman’ ultimately breaking stereotypes and reconstructing the social construct of family.

## **Methodology**

A qualitative approach has been made in the selection of movies for the intended study and a discourse analysis will be followed for further understanding and interpretation of the concept of gaze in the making of film narratives exclusively in Tamil Cinema. The male gaze in media is the blatant portrayal of women as mere objects of sexual desire from the perspective of men who come from a patriarchal society.



It was first developed by film theorist Laura Mulvey who attempts to discern the three different perspectives that help the filmmakers maintain a symbolic order in this male-dominated craft: the perspective of the camera; the perspective of the audience and finally that of the characters. “The film opens with the woman as an object of the combined gaze of the spectator and all the male protagonists in the film. She is isolated, glamorous, on display, and sexualized. But as the narrative progresses, she falls in love with the main male protagonist and becomes his property, losing her outward glamorous characteristics, her generalized sexuality, and her show-girl connotations; her eroticism is subjected to the male star alone. Using identification with him, through participating in his power, the spectator can indirectly possess her too.” (Mulvey)

In the cinematic diegesis, a woman is subjected to three different perspectives of the male gaze right from the man behind the lens to the male characters within the narrative and finally that of the male spectator as an audience. Cultural influence on gender roles has been very crucial in determining the position of women in the social hierarchy. In *Theorizing the Male Gaze: Some Problems* (1989), the researcher said that “the concept of the male gaze has evolved into a theory of patriarchy, that being subjected to the male gaze has negative psychological consequences upon the mental health of women, especially from the emotional and mental stresses of continually being asked to perform by and for men to the unrealistic standards of phallogentric masculinity.” (Snow) Even after the gradual subversion of the male gaze in Tamil cinema narratives, women are still denied pay parity and there are still comparatively fewer female technicians on the whole in the Tamil film industry which can be attributed to the prevailing relations of power operating within the film fraternity.

### **Subversion of Male Gaze**

Women who have been for a very long time submissive housewives in the narratives of the directors were later presented to us as elegant individuals who graced the narrative space with their intelligence and charm. Heroines of K. Balachander, Balu Mahendra, and Bharathiraja were set apart from their contemporaries because, unlike other female characters who were meek and subordinate, they were resolute and independent in their actions and decisions. *Miss Kamala* (1936) written and directed by T.P. Rajalakshmi, an adaptation of her novel *Kamalavalli* is one of the very first narratives filmed from a female gaze. Kamala defies convention by marrying her beloved Kanappan eventually after being forced into a marriage with a doctor.

*Indira* (1995), directed by Suhasini Maniratnam is one of its kind where the eponymous female protagonist turns into a social crusader by fighting the long war of caste discrimination in her village after the death of her father who had been stabbed to death for the same.

According to Laura Mulvey, women were placed as spectacles and subjected to objectification and were unable to return to the male gaze. Thus, she wholly rejects the depictions of women in cinematic narratives as weak and false representations of femininity. Nevertheless, women in the narratives of Maniratnam and Gautam Vasudev Menon are free-spirited and poised. They have an air of elegance about them and are often portrayed as intellectuals rather than an ordinary woman desired only for their ethereal appearance. "Women, they have minds, and they have souls, as well as just hearts. And they've got ambition, and they've got talent, as well as just beauty. I'm so sick of people saying that love is just all a woman is fit for." (Alcott)

The characters Divya in *Mouna Raagam*, Indra in *Kannathil Muthamittal*, Maya in *KaakhaKaakha*, Archana in *Mozhi*, and Tara in *OK Kanmani* were written and captured beautifully by men who were Feminists. These characters embodied womanhood with profundity and they all had a purpose and an individual search for meaning in their lives. Men are entitled to act at their discretion and when a woman does the same, she is at fault. Educated, independent women of free will are often misinterpreted as promiscuous, headstrong women who are destroyers of culture. "Feminism is the radical notion that women are human beings." (Kramarae)

### **Gender Swapping - The Redemption**

Feminist waves in Film criticism have led to an increase in several woman-centric films in the world of cinema. Tamil Cinema is not an exception and has produced more number of films with women as the protagonists in recent times. There were times when women with strong personalities were made to play the antagonists, opposite the male superstars. Characters like Neelambari from *Padayappa* and Pechi from *Sandakozhi 2* have been intentionally used by the directors to replace the stereotypical, unapologetic villain for a better reception.

Films like *Aramm*, *Aruvi*, *36 Vayathinile*, and *Raangi* have used the same techniques of commercial narratives just by replacing the protagonists with female characters thereby making them woman-centric films. In the novel *Shirley, A Tale*, the novelist says that "If men could see us as we really are, they would be a little amazed; but the cleverest, the acutest men are often under an illusion about women: they do not read them in a true light: they misapprehend them, both for good and evil: their good woman is a queer thing, half doll, half angel; their bad woman almost always a fiend."

(Bronte) Female directors like Gayathri Pushkar, Sudha Kongara, Halitha Shameem, and Madhumita Sundararaman on the other hand, have created films where men and women coexist throughout the narratives that are natural and realistic without any undue glorification of characters. Neo-Noir films like *Aaranya Kaandam* and *Super Deluxe* directed by Thiagarajan Kumararaja and *Saani Kaayidham* by Arun Matheswaran have been evocative and graphic in their making. They presented to us the raw emotions of vengeful women who succeeded in exacting revenge for the injustice meted out to them. Having said that, too much blood and gore made the plots far-fetched. Over the years, with the gradual changes in the portrayal of women in Tamil Cinema from being objects of desire to becoming empowered and liberated, visual media has had an incontrovertible influence on the repositioning of women in the social hierarchy.

## Conclusion

Cinema has always been a part of our Tamil society and it has indelibly carved out a niche for itself. The evident increase in the fandom for different genres of cinema stands as a testament to the popularity and influence of narratives among the audience. “Making movies is a little like walking into a dark room. Some people stumble across furniture, others break their legs but some of see better in the dark than others. The ultimate trick is to convince, persuade.” (Wilder) Cinema is an art form that effectively tries to mirror the greatness of people, abject poverty, social hierarchy, politics, and its sordid reality. The same cinema that objectified women, has reiterated the importance of women's education and emancipation. *Kamali from Nadukkaveri* (2021) and *Ayali* (2023) have strongly emphasized the importance of women's education, which they were denied due to cultural norms and practices that prevailed in the patriarchal society. Tamil cinema has indeed played a significant role in educating and creating awareness among the public about gender equality and women empowerment for the betterment of society and the improvement of the status quo.

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## **Wokeism in Tamil Cinema: A Critical Analysis of Contemporary Narratives and their Psychosocial Impact**

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### **Introduction**

Cinema serves as an artistic expression as well as a powerful tool that mirrors or shapes society and plays a key role in human existence. It is revered and deeply personal, especially in the context of Tamil cinema where a rich mix of emotion, cultural representation, and political commentary is evident. The evolution of the Kollywood industry reflects a shift from merely producing commercial successes to actively contributing to social change through political narratives. From a political point of view, the influence of such films is discussed. Their psychological and social implications are looked over. This prompts an exploration of whether the concept of "woke" or "wokeism" genuinely fosters social awareness. Are the directors aiming to instigate change, or are they merely undergoing a genre shift? This critical analysis of contemporary Kollywood films seeks to shed light on the emergence of woke culture in film and its psychosocial impact on audiences. In addition, it examines how this awakening wave challenges social norms and stereotypes and acknowledges its potential limitations. Cultural expression is done through the medium of Tamil cinema .it also serves as a function of social, cultural, political, and economic institutions (Pendakur). It significantly influences people's lives by impacting and molding the foundations of society. Cinema serves as a gateway to explore and analyze the cultural characteristics of a community, such as a caste system. By engaging with Tamil cinema, one can gain insights into its origins, structure, and the role it plays in shaping and influencing society (Gokulsing & Dissanayake, 1998, p. 8) Movies mirror society, and reciprocally, they exert influence on society by altering representations, questioning the morals of the audience, and shaping viewers' perspectives (Mines & Lamb). The term "Woke," originally an adjective rooted in African American Vernacular English (AAVE), initially signifying vigilance against racial prejudice and discrimination, has evolved to encompass a broader awareness of societal inequalities. Advocating for liberal progressive ideology and policies as a manifestation of awareness and responsiveness to systemic injustices and biases. This expanded usage includes concerns about racial injustice, sexism, and LGBTQIA rights. Beyond a mere adjective, "Woke" has transformed into a movement promoting inclusivity, empathy, and an understanding of diverse perspectives. Its popularity surged in the later part of the 2010s, becoming associated with issues beyond race, extending to gender and marginalized identities. Those who align with "Woke" values actively combat oppression, striving for equity and justice.

The rise of woke culture has been particularly pronounced on social media platforms. The foundational principles of wokeism involve educating oneself about existing societal problems and political issues, nurturing empathy and understanding, speaking out against oppression, and embracing continuous learning and growth. Cinema and mass media play a crucial role in depicting inequalities, serving as a medium for directors to educate the public about prevailing scenarios. In the realm of Tamil cinema, a shift is noticeable as contemporary narratives move away from focusing solely on commercial hits and family blockbusters. Instead, directors are increasingly embracing woke culture, using their films to disseminate social awareness, with a specific emphasis on portraying social activism. The connection between social issues and political representation in Tamil cinema has been present since the time of MGR films and continues in today's movies. In a study by Genila et al., they looked at films with characters from marginalized groups discussing modern social themes. Movies like *Karnan*, *Jai Bhim*, and *Mandela* were specifically highlighted. But still, there exists a need for more research to understand how people view these movies. Velayudam and Devadas (2021) closely examined how Tamil cinema shows certain aspects of Tamil culture and language. They found that the movies often emphasize a unique Tamil identity, sometimes overshadowing the broader Indian identity. Their research discussed issues like casteism and gender discrimination in Tamil films. They also explored how movies talk about everyday politics in the state. Current studies that focus on analyzing entire movies fall short of understanding how audiences are psychologically affected and how it influences their beliefs and attitudes. Swarnavel Eswaran in her essay highlighted the multidimensional nature of the portrayal of Dalit masculinity. They critically analyzed Mari Selvaraj's and Pa. Ranjith's movies including "Pariyerum Perumal", "Karnan", and "Sarpetta Parambarai" where the specificity of portraying the Dalit community and representation of masculinity that breaks the stereotypes makes the readers understand that the filmmakers avoid making masculinity too simple, especially when influenced by patriarchy among the upper castes. further analysis of how audiences take the representation of woke themes which is not only limited to Dalit representation but other social issues in general will pave the way for the responsible creation of movies and also to get a reasonable response from the audiences. This shift is notably intertwined with the infusion of "woke" culture into cinematic narratives, evolving from its origins as a response to racial prejudice to encompass broader issues, including feminism. This analysis delves into the feminist dimensions embedded in this cultural shift, examining how Tamil cinema explores gender roles, intersectionality, and the contributions of feminist filmmakers.

As cinema continues to shape societal reflections, understanding these feminist elements becomes paramount in comprehending the psychosocial impact on audiences and the transformative potential within Tamil filmmaking.

## **Methodology**

The methodology employed for the critical analysis of films, particularly those with woke themes in Tamil cinema, involves the application of the Intersectionality framework. This framework is utilized to examine diverse representations, power dynamics, and woke-centric themes within films, focusing on the portrayal of various forms of oppression. Noteworthy films, such as "Pariyerum Perumal," "Jai Bhim," and "Natchathiram Nagargiradhu," are selected for in-depth analysis, applying genre and auteur theory to understand the nuances of their woke themes. Additionally, audience reception studies are incorporated to investigate how viewers interpret and respond to the films' woke themes, considering diverse perspectives and critical reception. Semi-structured interviews are conducted to explore participants' perceptions of woke-centric films and their portrayal of social justice issues. Thematic analysis is employed to identify recurring patterns, sentiments, and opinions, with a particular emphasis on discerning the psychosocial impact of these films. The research ensures ethical considerations by obtaining informed consent from each participant, highlighting the voluntary nature of their involvement, and guaranteeing confidentiality and anonymity.

### **Psychological Exploration of Woke-Centric Movies**

#### **Pariyerum Perumal**

Mari Selvaraj's directorial debut, "Pariyerum Perumal," released in 2018, garnered widespread acclaim for its socially conscious messaging. The film explores the emotional catharsis of a writer who utilizes writing as a coping mechanism to express his deeply repressed thoughts. Selvaraj finds triumph in depicting the protagonist's journey, hailing from a Dalit community, facing social discrimination and nearly witnessing the harm inflicted on his family due to caste-based stereotypes. The central woke theme of the film revolves around the harsh realities of caste-based discrimination prevalent in Tamil Nadu. It explores the concept of intersectionality, delving into the intricate struggles faced by its characters.

The movie weaves together themes of caste discrimination and gender complexities, portraying the transformative friendship between Pariyan and Jo. Their unique bond challenges societal norms, shedding light on the complex intersection of caste and gender oppression. The narrative also highlights the pivotal role of education, exposing the intersection of academic aspirations with systemic biases.

Economic challenges further compound the characters' hardships, emphasizing the intersection of class and caste struggles.

The legal system becomes a critical lens for examining institutionalized discrimination, providing a nuanced critique of intersecting societal structures... It sheds light on the challenges confronted by marginalized communities, highlighting the enduring prejudices that persist in contemporary society. Notably, the use of visual rhetoric symbolically conveys meaning to the audiences like the use of blue colour to signify Ambedkar's ideology saying all creatures under the sky are equal, use of animals like dogs as a symbolic representation of social hierarchy adds depth to the narrative. The protagonist grapples with issues of self-identity, consistently encountering challenges that force him to confront these struggles throughout the storyline. The movie effectively portrays the psychological impact of existing social prejudices, showcasing how they profoundly affect an individual. From a psychological perspective, the film can be seen as a journey of psychological resilience, wherein the protagonist copes with his adversities through the pursuit of education which acts as a weapon to break stigma" *Pariyerum Perumal*" also delves into the portrayal of peer influence in perpetuating prejudices, offering a sensitive exploration of the profound impact of oppression on one's well-being. While not explicitly talking about feminism, the movie addresses women's agency and liberation. The female lead, Jo, portrays a strong and resilient character, emphasizing the importance of solidarity in fighting against oppression.

### **Jai Bhim**

Tackling institutional injustice and caste oppression, T.J. Gnanvel fearlessly depicted the prevailing political landscape in Tamil Nadu in the National Award-winning film "Jai Bhim," released in 2021. The movie transcends beyond being just a social commentary; its very title pays homage to Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, a champion of equality throughout his life. The film's woke theme revolves around the ongoing battle against caste oppression and injustices faced by marginalized groups. Again the role of intersectionality where caste and gender can contribute to societal oppression. The film portrays the psychological trauma endured by its protagonist, Rajakannu, creates a ripple effect of fear and hopelessness within their society or community. The nuanced portrayal of intergenerational trauma and collective memory underscores the struggle against injustice, revealing the resilience required to find a silver lining in every cloud. This prompts the audience to contemplate the existence of hope and light, fostering optimism for future generations. The movie's depiction of power dynamics and powerlessness within the marginalized Irular community challenges viewers to reassess their moral values.



By delving into these themes, "Jai Bhim" prompts a re-evaluation of societal norms and inspires contemplation on the potential for positive change. To view the movie from a feminist lens, the movie centers on Sengaani, Sengeni's wife, and her quest for justice. Her determination, bravery, and refusal to be silenced bring to the forefront feminist themes of agency and resistance. The film portrays how Sengaani experiences double oppression because of her caste and gender, emphasizing the importance of intersectional feminism. This perspective acknowledges the intertwined challenges that marginalized groups confront, recognizing the overlapping issues faced by individuals due to their different identities.

### **Natchathiram Nagargiradhu**

The traditional cinema formula typically revolves around protagonists, antagonists, and familiar family dynamics, and this has been a common plot structure in the Kollywood industry. However, recent films are deviating from this norm, opting for socially conscious narratives that represent diverse groups. One notable example is Pa. Ranjith's "Natchathiram Nagargiradhu," released in 2022 on an OTT platform, which garnered both praise and criticism. The film introduces a woke theme by exploring the intersectionality of caste and gender-based discrimination, particularly against the LGBTQIA community. In contrast to Ranjith's usual focus on representing the Dalit community, this film shifts its lens towards themes of love, identity, and societal constructs. The director utilizes symbolic representations of discrimination through theatre plays, challenging the conventional portrayal of love by emphasizing its political nature. Each character in the movie is portrayed as a protagonist, with special attention given to Rene, the female lead. Her character takes the audience through the internal struggles, acceptance, and empowerment of a woman, illustrating how self-exploration contributes to building one's identity. The movie delves into early attachment style patterns, revealing the complexities of forming relationships and how past experiences impact present ones, especially evident in the conflicts between Rene and Iniyan. The director explores the therapeutic aspect of art, suggesting that expressing repressed thoughts and unspoken words through theatre plays goes beyond mere entertainment, highlighting the profound role of art in self-expression. Rene, the main female character, is a complex figure in the movie, representing feminist ideas according to Ranjith. She's a strong, Ambedkarite woman, independent yet sensitive, facing challenges that Dalit women deal with in modern India. Her feminism comes from her experiences, recognizing how caste and gender together oppress women. Rene is determined to fight against both, also wanting to make feminism more inclusive by addressing the marginalization of Dalit women within the movement.

However, there's been criticism, mainly on social media, especially from those who support male dominance. Some call Rene's character a pseudo-feminist. This debate highlights the ongoing confusion about what feminism means in India, especially in places like Tamil Nadu. It shows that the understanding of feminism is still unclear and debated, with different viewpoints shaping the conversation and reflecting larger societal struggles around gender and equality.

### **Social Awareness and Psychosocial Impact**

The examination of audience responses to films with woke themes delves into their effectiveness in raising awareness about social issues and explores the psychosocial effects on viewers. Through interviews with a select audience, the prevailing attitudes and perceptions regarding woke-centric movies and their impacts are unveiled. Audiences display a positive embrace of diverse characters and stories, recognizing the importance of cinema in reflecting the entirety of society. The notion that art, particularly cinema, merely serves as entertainment is rejected, with audiences regarding it as a potent medium for communication and societal influence. Notably, films such as "Pariyerum Perumal," "Karnan," "Maamanan," and "Aruvi" are acknowledged for catalyzing shifts in perspectives, fostering a deeper understanding of societal issues, and facilitating personal growth. The connection between cinematic narratives and their own experiences indicates a profound impact on their worldview and heightened social awareness. Acknowledging the dual nature of cinema's impact, and recognizing its potential for positive change while being cautious about perpetuating negative stereotypes is desired. Participants discuss cinema's role in shaping societal attitudes and its ability to both reflect and challenge prevailing norms. While some express skepticism about cinema's immediate impact on public discourse, participants recognize its role in shaping opinions and contributing to broader societal discussions. Personal experiences of changing perspectives and increased awareness underscore the transformative potential of film. Despite concerns about potential drawbacks, including misinterpretation and negative influence, respondents maintain a neutral stance on the impact of films on mental health.

Some consciously maintain emotional distance from cinematic experiences to safeguard their well-being. Limited engagement in discussions with differing perspectives post-movie viewing suggests a separation between the impact of movies and active engagement in social discourse. Desire for responsible filmmaking, advocating for narratives that contribute positively to societal awareness and understanding. Stronger emphasis is given on conscientious storytelling reflecting a hope for the industry to prioritize narratives with societal responsibility.

The exploration of audience responses to films with woke themes not only sheds light on their effectiveness in raising awareness about social issues but also delves into the intersectionality of feminism within cinematic narratives. Interviews with a diverse audience reveal nuanced perspectives on the portrayal of women and gender issues in woke-centric movies. Participants commend films such as "Pariyerum Perumal," "Karnan," "Maamanan," and "Aruvi" for not only catalyzing shifts in societal perspectives but also for challenging traditional gender roles and stereotypes. The positive reception of diverse characters extends to the realm of feminism, with audiences acknowledging the significance of cinema in dismantling gender norms and advocating for inclusivity.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, as we appreciate the endeavours of movies with social messages to shed light on significant issues, it is imperative to recognize the subjective lens through which these narratives are interpreted, particularly concerning addressing societal challenges. The infusion of feminist perspectives in contemporary Tamil cinema narratives has the potential to revolutionize societal norms and foster gender equality. The crux lies in promoting conscious and responsive storytelling that not only exposes prevalent issues but also champions equitable solutions. By incorporating feminist ideals, these films can serve as powerful tools to educate audiences on the nuances of gender dynamics, ultimately contributing to dismantling patriarchal structures. In a world where women's struggles may often go unnoticed amidst the fast-paced and materialistic milieu, films advocating feminist principles play a crucial role in raising awareness. Encouraging the creation and support of movies that not only educate but also challenge gender norms can significantly shape a more inclusive and socially conscious society, ensuring that these empowering messages are passed on to the next generation.

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## **A Glimpse of Atheist Feminism: Women in *Ayali***

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### **Abstract**

Tamil cinema has elevated its representations to the next level by releasing numerous extended versions of films, such as web series. The COVID-19 crisis prompted over-the-top (OTT) platforms to create web series in which filmmakers are free to present their scripts in an incisive manner. As they have more leisure, the audience has also changed their preferences from viewing films to web series. The study has chosen *Ayali*, an eight-episode series that premiered in 2023 on Zee's OTT platform, which drew immediate attention for its simple yet compelling depiction of women's lack of agency in the fictional village of Veerappanai in Pudukottai district. The conceptual framework of the paper is based on atheist feminism. Atheist feminism, a synthesis of feminist theory and atheism, focuses on the political, social, and cultural obstacles to gender equality. Through the integration of multiple perspectives and ideas, this theoretical framework examines the challenges and experiences faced by women in *Ayali* in patriarchal regimes. The culture, religion, and patriarchal practices that centre around divinity are contested by atheist feminists. An uncanny tradition in the village advises families to marry off their daughters the same year they reach puberty to preserve their culture. The protagonist, Tamizhselvi, is a young girl who grows up in such a setting and attempts to destroy the myths that men have created to make women subservient to them at all times. The paper intends to evaluate the series from the perspective of an atheist feminist, with an emphasis on Tamizhselvi, the lead character, as she strategically combats the culture that brings misery to women.

**Keywords:** *Ayali*, women, agency, atheist, feminist.

In the contemporary climate of gender debate, Tamil cinema has come a long way since its inception. What was once considered humility and culture is now being called into question as the audience's perspective shifts throughout time. *Ayali*- any girl from any rural or small town in India might relate to the plot, the lead character, or the mother's character. Characters in *Ayali* are simple and expressed in a way that is relevant to our society. The purpose of all media is to spread a message, and in the twenty-first century, films are the most effective medium for doing so. Films have evolved into a variety of formats, including short films, documentaries, full-length advertising, and, most recently, web series.

Web series have the liberty to represent the full-length depiction of the important characters of the plotline, therefore justifying the subject matter of the plotline coordinated by the characters.

Following COVID, several Tamil web series appeared on OTT platforms and attracted a sizable viewership. Web series like *Paava Kadhaigal*, *Suzhalthe Vortex*, *November Story*, *Label*, *Vadhandhi*, and *Iru Dhuruvaan* are a few that are worth viewing.

A compelling storyline should be chosen for the web series to keep it moving in a positive direction. The narrative of *Ayali* is one such web series that addresses the subject of women defying patriarchy in the name of God. *Ayali* is a social drama with thoughtful screenplay. A teenager along with her fights against superstitious customs and traditions in her village for women's basic rights. The Veerappannai village, the setting of the story is a reflection of modernizing India 1990s, with a group of people fighting to preserve culture and traditions while attempting to impede progress for their own political and lifestyle gains. Not just in the instance of women's subjugation, but one can also readily associate this rural situation with other societal issues. The screenplay and dialogue written by Muthukumar were brilliant, the narration kept the audience interested throughout the entire series, and the discourse throughout the series is quite powerful, provoking the thoughts of both the fellow characters and the viewers. The actors gave excellent performances that were consistent with their roles.

This article seeks to determine if the characters in *Ayali* are best suited as atheist feminists. The article lists the behaviours of the characters that are consistent with the principles of atheist feminism. Each series has a unique plot, some mediocre, some with a great narrative. One series that has a simple but thought-provoking plot is *Ayali*, which premiered in 2023 on the OTT channel Zee5. There are considerable reviews stating that the plotline of *Ayali* is quite outdated and that the current society is not heavily facing oppressions such as Child marriage, domestic abuse, and Gender inequality in Education. According to a UNICEF report, "Child marriage is becoming less common in India, but the country still accounts for one in three of the world's child brides. Child brides include girls under 18 who are already married, as well as women of all ages who first married in childhood (UNICEF 4). While *Ayali* takes place thirty years ago in the 1990s, it is distressing to see from a recent UNICEF assessment, that India has not progressed to its full potential.

The people of Veerapanani were deeply anchored in the myth of *Ayali*, who never allowed their women to leave the village, and never let the women enjoy basic rights. Young girls are scared to death about attaining puberty.

They are made to feel that they have sinned by becoming adults. Though Tamilselvi handles the entire plot, fellow characters such as Tamilselvi's Mother, her teacher Savithri her companions Mythili and Kayal imprint a strong attitude. After reaching puberty, no woman is permitted to return to school. No female in the village had completed grade ten. It is believed that if the girls do not get married shortly after reaching puberty, their goddess deity *Ayali* will condemn them. Additionally, it is forbidden for men and adult women to enter the *Ayali* Temple's premises. Their strong affiliation to their culture framed around God, blindly makes them believe that Women are the key to sanctity but their direct involvement in the social structure will shatter the holiness. The episodes start with the two young girls, Tamilselvi and Mythili, demonstrating their earnestness over education. They are diligent students who aspire to pass their board examinations before reaching adolescence. While Savithri, their mentor, pushes them to study hard, the maths teacher, who comes out as a misogynistic and unfit academic, harbours resentment against Savithri and waits for an excuse to get rid of her. When Mythili reached puberty, her suffering started. She seems to relish the first few days of the festivities. However, the joy quickly fades and her mother starts preparing her to be a devoted wife. When the maths teacher instigates Tamil Selvi's mother's ego, the narrative moves very swiftly. She makes a vow that her daughter will pass the board examinations without even realizing that her period began six months ago. Tamil Selvi, was taken aback by her mother's tenacity who is a strong, devout, god-fearing woman with cultural ties. Tamil Selvi feels that it's time to tell her mother the truth about her puberty after witnessing her mother's tenacity. Despite being completely flabbergasted, her mother managed to persuade herself to support her child's educational goals. The promises of a better life made by Mythili's mother are sunk when Mythili is pushed into marriage with an alcoholic man. She is willfully tricked into staying in an abusive marriage and is once more assured that after giving birth to the child, her life will improve.

A recent report generated by Devanik Saha states, "Nearly 12 million Indian children were married before the age of 10 years, 84% of them Hindu and 11% Muslim, reveals India Spend Analysis of recently released census data." (Saha). Given that child marriages are still a problem in India today, it is startling to see that the data above was gathered nearly three decades after the events depicted in the movie.

All of the female characters in the series have a strong fear of God. Though they are neither feminists nor atheists, the revolutionary change among the women of Veerapanai is highly acknowledged by the tenets of atheist feminism.

The initial instance of moderate atheist feminism can be found in Selvi's mother, a God-fearing lady who decides to defy social standards to ensure her daughter's welfare. She maintains the secret throughout the screen and helps her daughter to complete her board exams successfully. She even started enjoying her liberty when she came out of the village for the very first time to drop her daughter at the nearest exam centre.

An atheist can have a variety of reasons for their disbelief. The hypocrites who impose their power over others to get things done are the ones who frame the so-called beliefs centered around God. Humans, particularly dominant-sex males, have had a predisposition to establish dominance over other sex- females from the beginning of human society. It is still unclear why Females first put up with this supremacy. They may require protection from outside forces like predators, severe weather, and most importantly, survival. But in today's world, none of these things exist. The room for women to prosper on their own has been provided by modern civilization. Women's acts of seeking protection were misinterpreted as modernity developed, which prompted men to create the discipline known as culture. The focus of culture is God, and women are made to feel fearful for no apparent reason. Women's lives are marked by an imaginary boundary that they voluntarily fear. The goal of atheist feminists is to cross that uncomfortable boundary.

“The most liberal kind of feminism is atheist feminism. Feminism highlights issues such as gender inequalities, identity crises, and a lack of agency. The agency surrounding God in culture, religion, and philosophy is challenged by atheist feminism. Women are forbidden by the doctrine that surrounds God, not by God him or herself.” (Velumani and Balasundararaj 45)

Fear of God leads to child marriages in Veerapanai. Tamilselvi is the one who teaches the villagers that not Ayali, but Men are the ones who dictate how to dehumanise women to feel powerful for all time. Mythili's husband died of alcoholism, leaving her as a child widow with a newborn. Everyone feels sorry for her and claims that when ladies entered the grounds of the Ayali temple, the deity became enraged, and bad things happened to them. No one believed that his alcoholism was the cause of his death.

“Child widows are the most vulnerable of all widows as they are often burdened with adult responsibilities for which they are ill-equipped and unlike older widows, they experience an accelerated journey through the major life stages of childhood, wifehood, motherhood and widowhood, while still a child themselves.” (Watson)

On behalf of Mythili, TamilSelvi blurts out that she had been visiting the temple grounds since puberty, even before the unfortunate incidents that occurred in the village. The locals, including Tamil Selvi's father, became outraged and assaulted both Tamil Selvi and her mother. However, Tamil Selvi's father changed his mind and abandoned the plan to demolish the school building when she made a heartfelt request for him to respect her wishes. Following the Veerapanai people's decision to end child marriage, the series rushes to the conclusion. Though the climax is widely anticipated by the audience, the dramatic depiction of the conclusion instills relaxation.

It is no wonder the most basic form of rebellion against gender-based oppression would be a rebellion against organised religion (Trzebiatowska 4). Women of Veerappanai started rebelling against their village's men, therefore defying the rules framed around the myth of Ayali. Ladies who had formerly revered gods began to despise their cultural affinities. Regarding the inquiry, Are *Ayali*'s characters feminist atheists? Throughout the series, the characters transform ardent supporters of patriarchal standards into those who defy them. Since the protagonists in *Ayali* are not entirely against God, it is especially fitting to refer to them as moderate atheist feminists. They also reject the societal ideals that support child marriage, domestic abuse, and women's lack of agency. The article is articulated by qualitatively analysing the content of the episodes of the series. Characters are analysed under the lens of atheist feminist tenets, thereby concluding that the characters and the plotline coordinate and bring a satisfactory ending to the viewers.

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## **A Study on Portrayal of Women in the Period Film ‘Madrasapattinam’ (2010)**

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### **Abstract**

This study focuses on the portrayal of women in the period film ‘Madrasapattinam’ (2010) (A.L.). This is a qualitative study based on how women are portrayed in the selected film using the tool of mise-en-scene. The study concludes that for a period film, the mise-en-scene helps the viewers not to deviate from the setting of the story and the mise-en-scene must aid in the purpose of the storytelling. Here, in this selected film, the purpose is found to be showcasing a love story interlaced with the British period India and the natives’ struggle. Understanding the film through mise-en-scene gives the audience a much clearer understanding of the hidden elements of the film and will create a much more enjoyable experience. Infusing the Feminist aspect to this paper helped to see the hidden layers of how women are portrayed in this film. The study has shown that the film ‘Madrasapattinam’, though carries a fictional story around a historical event, gives weightage to the real pre-independence era’s lifestyle, environment, references, economic status, gender roles, etc.,

**Keywords:** Mise-en-Scene, film analysis, portrayal, film studies, Tamil cinema.

### **Introduction**

Films tend to have an impact on the viewers, so filmmakers often create content that has good quality and ideas. Movies in any genre have a purpose that can be understood with the help of analysing the movie. Indian films tend to carry a social message in most of their products especially promoting national development or patriotism.

Period films in India that focus on the pre-independence era usually revolve around freedom struggle. Bollywood films tend to take biography films based on freedom struggle rather than fictional ones. However, in Kollywood, we get to see a lot of fictional films than that of biographical projects but the depiction of the pre-independence era in such films is no less than that of a biopic. Women’s portrayal in the pre-independence era has a sensitive touch since women were not given importance in society at that period. So, in a film that came in the 21<sup>st</sup> century about the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the portrayal must be studied carefully.

Mise-en-scène, a term originating from the French language, was initially coined in 1833, meaning, "putting it into a scene". Some scholars interpret mise-en-scène as a descriptor for the director's meticulous control over the visual elements presented in a film.

This term comes to life in various ways, evident in films featuring diverse additional effects, varying makeup corresponding to the scene's mood, and lighting detailly arranged to create a harmonious and cinematic atmosphere. The impact of mise-en-scène is profound, contributing to a more captivating and intriguing cinematic experience. It encompasses all visual components in films, including settings, actors, backgrounds, costumes, and lighting. Mise-en-scène comprises several crucial elements, including settings, costumes and makeup, lighting, as well as the actors' movements (Bordwell & Thompson, 2009). Usually in films, when mise-en-scene is properly organised, we get to see a proper character arc to the subject. The process of causing a character change that is supported by the aspect of mise-en-scene makes a particular character more unique and magnetized (Setyawan, Prasetyowati, & Kurniasih, 2020).

Visual elements serve as an aesthetic tool in cinematic expression. They play a crucial role in enriching the plot, depicting the story's setting, highlighting characters' personalities and status, and unveiling the societal context of the action. Additionally, visuals are instrumental in conveying the specific stylistic choices embraced within (Mochama, 2020).

*Madrasapattinam*, an Indian Tamil language film, released in 2010, is a historical romantic drama film. It was written and directed by A. L. Vijay, featuring Arya and Amy Jackson in the lead roles. The story revolves around Amy Wilkinson, an old woman from England coming back to India in search of her long-lost lover, Ilamparithi. The story switches between her search for him and her memories of her times at Chennai alias Madrasapattinam during the mid-1940s. This film not only depicts the unrequited love between the characters but also highlights the comparison of the old and new Madras. Through Amy's narration, the audience can discern the distinctions in the city's beauty, particularly during the late 1940s. This paper will analyse the selected film for each female character with the help of mise-en-scene elements.

### **Research Objective**

- To analyse the portrayal of women in the selected films.
- To find out whether the women's portrayal in this paper was poor or not.

### **Methodology**

Qualitative content analysis is employed in this research by using the elements of mise-en-scene as the unit of analysis. This study involves gathering data by systematically analysing every scene in the film. Subsequently, the study will identify the areas where the mise-en-scene helped to elevate the patriotic touch in the film. The sampling used here is purposive sampling.

## Analysis

The film was viewed completely and specific scenes were selected for analysis. The elements of mise-en-scene including décor, space, lighting, costume, and acting were analysed in this film.

### Décor

In the film, the term "location" pertains to the actual physical or geographical backdrop employed in the narrative. A single film may encompass diverse cultures and beliefs through its geographical and physical settings. Additionally, the set and props must effectively convey the specific period and social or economic status of the depicted characters (Bature-Uzor, 2018). The film since set in the 1940s, and the makers have given utmost importance to visually appeal to the audience in showing the pre-independence era. In this film, the décor surrounding Amy looks neat and alluring. Amy's room is always lit with lights and decorations showing her rich lifestyle and respect in society. Her room has a Piano, and expensive furniture, which shows her economic status to be at the highest level as she is the Governor's daughter (Fig. 1). However, when we see Selvi, Parithi's sister, her surroundings are always plain and poor (Fig. 2). Her house is not neat and she is always surrounded by vessels and cloths to cook and clean. Even though Parithi and Selvi are from the same household, Selvi is predominantly seen inside the house doing the chores.



Fig. 1: Amy's bedroom



Fig. 2: Selvi at her house

### Space

Analysing the positioning of subjects and the space composition within the frame can elucidate the atmosphere of a scene or the emotions of the characters within it. The dynamics of character relationships can be readily comprehended through an examination of the space between them (Joseph, 2019). Close-up shots are employed to convey deep emotions. In this film, a close-up shot is given to Amy only to show her beauty and during romantic scenes to establish her shyness (Fig. 3). On the other hand, the film employs close-up shots of the protagonist to show his anger towards the British, patriotism towards India or when being tortured by Britishers (Fig. 4).



Fig. 3: Amy with Parithi



Fig. 4: Parithi tortured by British Police

### Lighting

Though lighting is part of cinematography, it significantly influences the projection of images in a film to the audience (Mochama, 2020). High key lighting is employed whenever Amy's shot is shown in the beginning but as the film further proceeds and when she is with Parithi, low key lighting is used to denote her life is about to see a dark phase. Usually, throughout the film, low-key lighting is used to give the essence of the sad reality of the pre-independence era. Whenever high key lighting is used, it is usually the scene where there are no other Britishers' involved either in frame or in the conversation. The film emphasizes lighting up the character of Amy for the reason of showing her beauty and rich background (Fig. 3) whereas the character of Selvi is always shown in poor lighting to authenticate her lifestyle (Fig. 2).

### Costume

Costumes play a role in enriching the narrative by indicating the social status of characters and suggesting their psychological disposition. The choice of clothing provides viewers with distinct insights into the characters. Additionally, costumes can subtly hint at the character development throughout the film (Lathrop & Sutton, 2015). In the film, we tend to see the Indian natives wearing their traditional dress and the Britishers with fine clothing. British men are seen with their uniforms whereas the British women are seen with costly silks and velvets. Throughout the film, we get to see Amy wearing semi-formal British dresses, and usually, her clothing colours are light or bright whereas the colour palettes of Selvi look plain, dull, and monotonous denoting her day-to-day life. However, we get to see Amy wearing the saree given by Selvi denoting that she is accepting the lifestyle of Parithi.



Fig. 5: Amy and her step-mom wearing fine clothes



Fig. 6: Amy wearing a saree

## Acting

As an integral component of *mise-en-scène*, acting holds a crucial role as it represents the very essence of the film through its characters. The cast and their performances significantly influence the portrayal of the roles they are assigned, playing a pivotal part in establishing the appropriate atmosphere and conveying intended meanings. The modulation of expressions and dialogue delivery serve as key elements that enable the audience to grasp the mindset of the characters throughout different segments of the film (Sreekumar & Vidyapeetham, 2015). The film shows Selvi as a frightened girl and Amy as a bold character. When Amy approaches Selvi in a friendly manner, she stands with fear in front of her (Fig. 7), whereas, Amy boldly speaks even in front of her British counterparts (Fig. 8).



Fig. 7: Selvi in front of Amy



Fig. 8: Amy confronting the British police

## Findings & Conclusion

This film set in the pre-independence era has given maximum importance to the Protagonist's love story, however, we get to visually experience the pre-independence era of India during the 1940s through this film more through the elements of *mise-en-scène* such as décor, space, acting, lighting and costume. Through this, we get to see how women were treated during the pre-independence era. However, it has been noted that Indian women's portrayal in this film was not inhumane compared to how they portrayed the male character.

It is also understood that though women were also part of the freedom struggle, no women in the film were shown involved in the freedom fight denoting that the maker was not very keen in showing women's contribution during the freedom struggle in this film. Only Amy's character shows boldness but that was too until a limit where she is forced to leave with her family. Hence, with the help of mise-en-scene analysis we can understand that though the film revolves around Amy, it was only on the aspect of searching for her lost love. Also, the fact that it took almost 60 years for her to independently decide to come back to India shows that she was portrayed weakly.

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## **Representation of Women and Marginalized Communities in Mari Selvaraj's *Maamannan* (2023)**

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### **Abstract**

In Mari Selvaraj's political drama *Maamannan* (2023), the clash between the historically privileged upper caste community and the Dalits is foregrounded. Despite being a long-standing public representative, the Dalit MLA Maamannan is often subjected to casteist prejudices and attacks, which sour his relationship with his son Veera. The hapless plight of Maamannan in front of the upper caste antagonist Rathnavel highlights the limitations of a representative democracy where even an elected member is made to feel small because of his caste, despite being a political leader. Selvaraj critiques the archaic institution of caste and shows that education and participation in electoral democracy leading to the emergence of political leadership, are the only viable avenues of dismantling the oppressive caste hierarchy. The importance of education in the upliftment of the downtrodden populace is signified by the free career coaching centre that Veera runs, which draws the ire of Rathnavel's family, who view education as a profit-making business, eventually leading to a gruesome violent outburst that set the narrative rolling. Selvaraj seems to opine that a socialist model of education that instills pride and self-sufficiency among the masses is the way forward, as exemplified by the electoral victory and renewed political importance of the eponymous protagonist Maamannan. This paper wishes to study this film as a critical text that engages with the caste faultlines of modern Tamil society and explores the possibility of a more equitable and representative democratic structure.

**Keywords:** Education, democracy, caste, politics, society

### **Introduction**

Adhiveeran and Maamannan grapple with the perplexity of one person's pursuit of justice transforming into a matter of honor and pride, disrupted by numerous adversaries. Noteworthy is Maamannan's resilience, finding solace in Rathnavel's similar resolve. While the film impresses with its nuanced details, it's Mari Selvaraj's reimagining of Vadivelu that creates a lasting memory. Initially cautious about laughing at Vadivelu, I soon admired how the actor effortlessly embodied a serious role.



Selvaraj crafts empathy, making us rally behind Vadivelu, utilizing his singing talent for emotional moments and granting him heroic scenes with a gun, confronting Rathnavel, and entering an assembly.

The film explores the distinction between restraint and cowardice, portraying Maamannan and Adhiv eeran as learning its significance. Karnan's call to fight isn't enough; understanding when and how to act becomes pivotal. Future Selvaraj films promise deeper explorations, with the imperfect Maamannan offering exciting prospects.

Udhayanidhi Stalin's final film before his hiatus from acting, portraying a politically charged character, showcases his commitment. Fahadh Faasil impresses as an egoistic upper-caste man, displaying versatility in evoking love and hate. Vadivelu surprises in a serious role, showcasing his unexplored depth. Keerthy Suresh, while serving the plot well, leaves her storyline feeling incomplete.

### **Directorial Vision**

Mari Selvaraj, known for addressing inequalities, presents "Maamannan" with a nuanced portrayal of societal issues. The film, though thought-provoking, grapples with a screenplay that fails to fully explore its rich material. The first half builds anticipation, but the second half becomes a repetitive drag, underutilizing key characters like Keerthy Suresh. Despite its flaws, the film successfully delivers a powerful message on privilege and inequality, making viewers reflect on societal dynamics.

Only a handful of Tamil filmmakers seamlessly integrate craftsmanship, knowledge, and societal relevance into their work. Mari Selvaraj, through his first two films, has carved a robust presence, delving into caste politics and societal inequalities. His third venture, "Maamannan," builds on this legacy, anchoring its storyline in real incidents, with Vadivelu's character as the pivotal force. While the first half impresses with strong storytelling, the second half falters in maintaining the initial intensity, making the film feel somewhat lightweight. Notably, Vadivelu delivers a stellar performance, Fahadh Faasil adds power, and AR Rahman's score elevates the film. Despite occasional dull moments, Mari Selvaraj succeeds in creating another impactful film, addressing pressing issues with compelling performances and immersive political packaging.

"Maamannan" unfolds as a compelling narrative anchored in real incidents, with Mari Selvaraj's adept direction shaping a film that explores caste politics and societal inequalities.

The first half impresses with strong storytelling and a standout interval scene that leaves a lasting impact. Vadivelu delivers a stellar performance in a lifetime role, while Fahadh Faasil adds power to the ensemble. The film, however, faces a slight dip in the second half, with a reduction in plot progression and intensity.

Nevertheless, AR Rahman's excellent score amplifies the film's energy, complementing Theni Eshwar's precise visuals. Despite occasional dull moments, Mari Selvaraj's "Maamannan" stands out as an impactful and important film, sparking meaningful debates on pressing issues. The fantastic performances, high moments in the first half, and immersive political packaging make it a worthwhile watch

"Maamannan" is a film that delves into the complexities of caste politics and societal inequalities, crafted by the skilled hands of director Mari Selvaraj. The narrative is grounded in real incidents, offering a glimpse into a world shaped by these pressing issues.

### **Script Analysis**

The strength of the film lies in its storytelling, particularly in the first half, where Mari Selvaraj sets the stage with a compelling narrative. The interval scene is a standout moment, creating a significant impact and setting the tone for the rest of the film. The choice of Vadivelu for the pivotal character of 'Maamannan' adds depth and brilliance to the storytelling, with his stellar performance leaving a lasting impression.

### **Impeccable Cast**

Fahadh Faasil's addition to the cast contributes to the film's power, and notable scenes in the first half, especially alongside Udhay, create memorable moments. Udhaynidhi delivers a measured and efficient performance, with the second half showcasing the full extent of his acting prowess. Keerthy's role, though neat, adds to the overall brilliance of the ensemble cast.

Despite the film's strengths, the second half experiences a slowdown, with a reduction in plot progression and intensity. This shift makes the film feel somewhat lightweight compared to its impactful first half. However, the exceptional score by AR Rahman serves as a significant boost, maintaining the film's energy and intensity. Theni Eshwar's visuals capture the fiery frames with precision, enhancing the overall cinematic experience.

In comparison to Mari Selvaraj's earlier works like "Pariyerum Perumal" and "Karnan," "Maamannan" may lack sustained intensity, occasionally encountering dull moments.

Nevertheless, the director once again succeeds in delivering an impactful and important film that raises awareness and sparks debates on crucial social issues. The immersive political packaging, fantastic performances, and high moments in the first half make "Maamannan" a noteworthy addition to Tamil cinema.

### **Women as Defiance Personified: Gender in *Maamannan***

In the film *Maamannan*, Veera's love interest Leela is the epitome of the Ambedkarite philosophy of "Educate, Organize, Agitate". She is aware of the importance of attaining education she emphasizes that education is the only to self-actualization for marginalized folks; the reason why she opens up a charitable coaching institute, defying the dictates of the rival for-profit, politically funded coaching centre. Even Rathnavel's wife Jyothi shows impeccable fortitude and restraint by confining her husband in a room to avert bloodshed. The women of *Maamannan* are remarkably well suited for the men around them, often acting as foils to them, and on the rare occasions when the script permits, becoming fully actualized protagonists.

### **Importance of the Film**

"Maamannan" holds significance in the realm of Tamil cinema for several reasons:

1. **Exploration of Societal Issues:** The film tackles pressing societal issues, particularly caste politics and inequalities. By weaving a narrative around real incidents, it sheds light on the challenges and complexities faced by individuals within the social fabric, contributing to a broader conversation on these issues.
2. **Impactful Storytelling:** Mari Selvaraj's adept storytelling and direction bring depth and authenticity to the narrative. The film's ability to engage the audience through a compelling storyline, especially in the first half, showcases the director's skill in addressing complex subjects with nuance.
3. **Stellar Performances:** Vadivelu's portrayal of the central character, 'Maamannan,' is a standout performance that adds gravitas to the film. The ensemble cast, including Fahadh Faasil and Udhaynidhi, contributes to the film's impact, highlighting the importance of strong performances in conveying the narrative.

4. Cinematic Craftsmanship: The film benefits from the expert craftsmanship of AR Rahman, whose score enhances the overall cinematic experience. Theni Eshwar's precise visuals capture the essence of the narrative, adding to the film's visual appeal.
5. Awareness and Debate: "Maamannan" catalyzes raising awareness and sparking debates on social issues. By presenting these topics in a cinematic format, the film has the potential to reach a wider audience and prompt discussions on the challenges faced by different sections of society.
6. Contribution to Tamil Cinema: Mari Selvaraj's consistent efforts in addressing socially relevant themes contribute to the evolution of Tamil cinema. His films, including "Maamannan," showcase a commitment to storytelling that goes beyond entertainment, emphasizing the power of cinema as a medium for social commentary.
7. In summary, "Maamannan" is important not only for its exploration of critical societal issues but also for its impact on the cinematic landscape, contributing to meaningful conversations and debates within and beyond the Tamil film industry.

### **Symbolism in the Film**

- 1) Caste Symbolism: Films addressing caste politics often use symbolic representations to depict the hierarchy and discrimination prevalent in society. Objects, colors, or rituals may serve as motifs to underscore the film's commentary on caste dynamics.
- 2) Journey as Metaphor: The protagonist's journey, both physical and metaphorical, is a common motif in films dealing with societal issues. It can symbolize the challenges and transformations individuals undergo in the face of social inequalities.
- 3) Symbolic Characters: Characters representing different social strata or ideologies can function as motifs. Their interactions and conflicts serve as a microcosm of broader societal issues.
- 4) Realism in Storytelling: The use of real incidents or realistic storytelling techniques can be a motif in films that aim to provide a genuine portrayal of societal challenges. This motif reinforces the film's connection to the real world.
- 5) Landscapes and Settings: The choice of settings, landscapes, and environments can carry symbolic meaning. Urban-rural divides or the juxtaposition of different locales may reflect social disparities.

- 6) **Rituals and Traditions:** Depicting rituals and traditions in the narrative can serve as a motif to highlight cultural practices and their impact on societal norms. This can be a way to critique or question established customs.
- 7) **Musical Themes:** The film's musical score, composed by AR Rahman or any other composer, may incorporate motifs that evoke certain emotions or themes. Musical elements can enhance the film's impact and contribute to its overall atmosphere.
- 8) **Visual Imagery:** Recurring visual motifs, such as specific objects, images, or visual metaphors, can be used to reinforce the film's themes. These visuals might carry deeper symbolic meanings related to societal issues.
- 9) It's important to note that the specific motifs in "Maamannan" would depend on the creative choices made by the filmmakers. These motifs, if present, would contribute to the film's thematic coherence and provide layers of meaning for the audience to interpret.

## **Conclusion**

The Ambedkar ideology portrayed in the works of Mari Selvaraj, Vetrimaran, and Pa Ranjith has spurred a surge in the creation of politically themed films. The success of these films can be attributed to the distinctive filmmaking styles adopted by these directors. A noteworthy aspect of Maamannan is the innovative approach taken in redefining the antagonist character, Rathnavel. Unlike the typical villain driven by a superiority complex, Rathnavel is a product of a societal climate that normalized hierarchical structures. Moreover, he is conscious that openly advocating for such beliefs is not socially acceptable.

In the scene where Rathnavel expresses his displeasure with Maamannan, his reaction is akin to someone breaking a long-standing custom. His actions are calculated, driven by an awareness of the political implications, and he meticulously plans each move. Even when the storyline traverses predictable phases, the portrayal of a nuanced antagonist adds depth to the film, steering it away from caricatured depictions and lending it a more serious and relevant tone. Selva RK's editing plays a pivotal role in building intrigue in various crucial junctures, while AR Rahman's background score enhances the impact of many pivotal scenes.

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## **Cinematic Justice for the Young: Legal Beneficence in Tamil Films and Indian Constitutional Parallels**

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### **Abstract**

This article investigates the portrayal of legal narratives in Tamil cinema concerning children's rights and benefits, with a comparative analysis of the films *Vazhakku Enn 18/9* (2012), *Ponmagal Vandhal* (2020), and *Chiththa* (2023). Focusing on the legal nuances presented in these movies, the study aims to discern how cinematic depictions align with or diverge from the principles enshrined in the Indian Constitution regarding children's rights. The exploration begins with *Vazhakku Enn 18/9*, examining the film's representation of juvenile justice, child protection, and the legal safeguards for minors. The present paper analyses the accuracy of the cinematic portrayal in comparison with the constitutional provisions safeguarding the rights of children in the Indian legal framework. Moving forward, the study explores *Ponmagal Vandhal* and *Chiththa* to unravel how these films address legal issues affecting children, ranging from child custody battles to broader societal concerns. The comparative analysis seeks to identify instances where cinematic narratives align with constitutional provisions, offering insights into potential cinematic influence on public awareness and discourse regarding children's legal rights. The research paper contributes to the emerging field of cinematic jurisprudence by shedding light on how these films depict the legal landscape surrounding children and their rights. It endeavours to assess the educational impact of these cinematic representations, exploring how they may contribute to a nuanced understanding of legal realities and constitutional principles among audiences. Ultimately, this research aims to provide a comprehensive perspective on how Tamil cinema grapples with legal themes concerning children and whether these cinematic narratives align with the constitutional safeguards in place to protect the rights and well-being of the younger generation in India.

**Keywords:** Children's rights, societal concerns, social commentary, public awareness, constitutional parallels, and legal safeguards

In the kaleidoscope of cinematic narratives, Tamil cinema stands as a vibrant tapestry reflecting the multifaceted dimensions of society. Among its many thematic explorations, the portrayal of legal narratives has emerged as a compelling avenue for introspection and discussion.

This present paper embarks on a nuanced exploration into the cinematic treatment of children's rights and benefits within the realm of Tamil cinema, employing a comparative lens to scrutinize the films *Vazhakku Enn 18/9* (2012), *Ponmagal Vandhal* (2020), and *Chithha* (2023). Through an in-depth analysis, this study endeavours to decipher how these cinematic narratives align or diverge from the bedrock of principles enshrined in the Indian Constitution about children's rights.

### **The Aim of the Study**

The primary aim is to create a platform for fostering legal literacy among children. This research aspires to instill a nuanced awareness of their rights, the legal system, and societal norms, utilizing the captivating narratives presented in Tamil cinema as a catalyst for learning and empowerment.

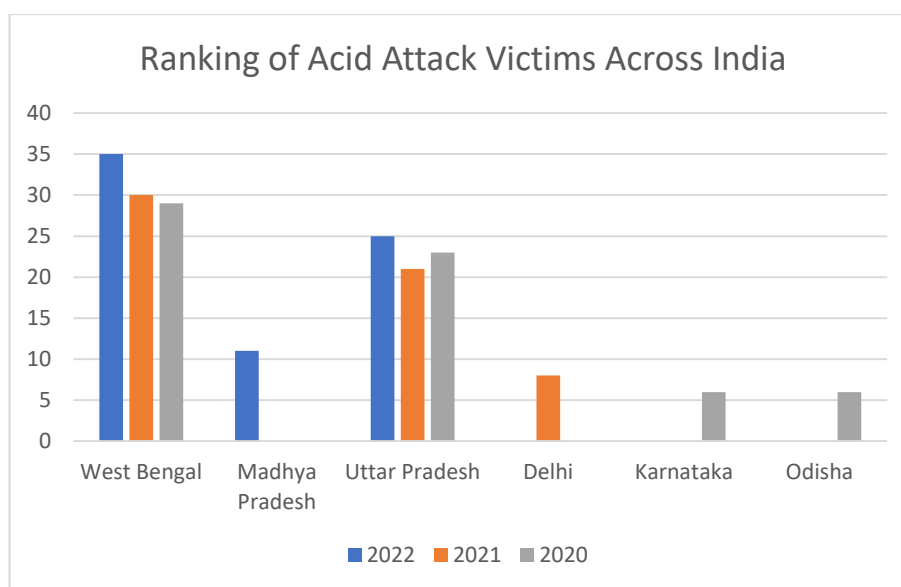
### **The Objective of the Study**

- To unravelling the intricate cinematic nuances in their portrayal of legal narratives concerning children's rights.
- To assess the degree to which cinematic narratives align or diverge from the foundational principles enshrined in the Indian Constitution.
- To Investigate the potential influence aiming to discern how films contribute to shaping societal perspectives beyond the cinematic realm.
- Pioneer a contribution to the emerging field of cinematic jurisprudence by not only critiquing the accuracy of cinematic representations but also by exploring their transformative potential in fostering legal literacy.
- To protect the rights and well-being of the younger generation in India.

*Vazhakku Enn 18/9*, a powerful and socially relevant Tamil film Directed by Balaji Sakthivel, contributes significantly to raising awareness about acid attacks in India. Through its compelling narrative, the movie sheds light on the harsh realities faced by acid attack survivors, emphasizing the prevalence of such heinous crimes in the country. The film delves into the lives of its characters, particularly the female protagonist, and portrays the physical and emotional trauma endured by victims of acid attacks. By bringing this issue to the forefront, *Vazhakku Enn 18/9* sparks important conversations about the urgent need for stricter laws, increased awareness, and societal change to prevent and address acid attacks.

The film serves as a poignant reminder of the resilience of survivors and the collective responsibility to eradicate this form of violence, fostering a sense of empathy and advocacy for the cause.

The cinematic lens is focused on the accuracy of representation, as this study delves into a comparative analysis of the constitutional provisions designed to safeguard the rights of children within the Indian legal framework.



The above-mentioned statistics details of Acid attack Victims are reported by The Indian Express and uploaded to a website on 19-12-2023. The National Crime Records Bureau data reveals that Bengal has consistently recorded the highest number of acid attack cases for the third consecutive year, prompting activists to emphasize that the reported figures might represent only the tip of the iceberg. It delves into the legal landscape, exploring the sections and acts implemented by the Government of India to protect young girls from the scourge of acid attacks.

Acid attack cases fall under the purview of Section 326 A of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), a provision that specifically addresses the grievous offense of acid attacks. This section outlines the legal consequences perpetrators may face for causing grievous hurt through acid attacks. Attempt to acid attack cases are registered under Section 326B of the IPC. This section focuses on pre-emptive legal measures against individuals attempting to commit acid attacks, ensuring a robust legal framework to address both successful attacks and thwarted attempts.

As the journey forwards, the narrative expands to encompass *Ponmagal Vandhal* and *Chithha*, delving into the intricate legal landscapes these films navigate concerning children.



From poignant child custody battles to broader societal concerns, this study aims to decipher how these cinematic representations address legal issues affecting the younger generation.

Through this comparative analysis, the research seeks to identify instances where cinematic narratives harmonise with constitutional provisions, providing invaluable insights into the potential influence of these films on public awareness and discourse surrounding children's legal rights.

*Ponmagal Vandhal* stands as a powerful testament to the potential of film to influence societal awareness, particularly among the younger generation. This article delves into the profound impact the movie has had on children, fostering an awareness of Indian constitutional law. Through its compelling narrative, the film transcends the boundaries of entertainment, catalyzing discussions on justice, legal principles, and the rights of the accused.

*Ponmagal Vandhal* directed by J.J. Fredrick, unfolds as a legal drama that unravels a decades-old mystery surrounding a series of child murders. The film, through its engaging storytelling, not only captivates audiences but also serves as an educative tool, shedding light on the intricacies of the Indian legal system. The movie navigates the complex terrain of juvenile justice, questioning the efficacy of legal safeguards in protecting the rights of young individuals accused of heinous crimes. This narrative thread sparks discussions among children regarding the nuanced balance between justice and the protection of juvenile rights.

This movie poignantly explores the rights of the accused and the importance of a fair trial. This theme introduces children to the foundational principles of the Indian Constitution, emphasizing the right to a legal defense, the presumption of innocence, and the pursuit of justice within the bounds of the law. The film resonates with Article 21 of the Indian Constitution, which guarantees the right to life and personal liberty. Children, through the movie, become acquainted with the broader implications of this constitutional provision, understanding how it intersects with the legal proceedings depicted on screen. This movie prompts discussions about the real-world implications of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act 2015, as children witness the challenges and dilemmas faced by young characters within the legal framework designed to protect them.

The film acts as an educational catalyst, sparking curiosity and interest in legal concepts among children. It opens avenues for discussions about the intricacies of the legal system, instilling a sense of responsibility and awareness of their rights. *Ponmagal Vandhal* doesn't merely entertain; it encourages a community discourse on legal principles.

Children, influenced by the film, engage in conversations about justice, fairness, and the significance of the Indian Constitution in shaping the legal landscape.

Continuing the present paper, our exploration delves into *Chithha* directed by S. U. Arun Kumar, where the cinematic narrative extends beyond individual legal battles to encompass broader societal concerns affecting children.

This section seeks to unravel the film's approach to legal themes and its potential influence on public awareness.

Studies reveal that 90 percent of child victims have some level of familiarity with their abusers, and nearly half of these offenders are identified as family members. Much like the narrative in last year's *Gargi*, *Chithha* emphasizes the unsettling truth that the dangers affecting our children often originate from much closer quarters than we tend to believe. *Gargi* is the Tamil Cinema which brings child abuse as the major theme of the movie. The depiction of abuse gains heightened impact when considering sequences that unfold discreetly behind closed doors, allowing our imagination to fill in the disturbing details. The discomfort intensifies when one realizes that the predator's provision list includes seemingly innocuous items such as baby food, lollipops, and petroleum jelly. Moreover, the film authentically endeavours to portray the legal intricacies of a POCSO case, offering insight into how law enforcement tackles the complexities of solving such cases. (*The Hindu*)

This article is more than a cinematic critique; it is a contribution to the emerging field of cinematic jurisprudence. By shining a light on how Tamil cinema depicts the legal terrain surrounding children and their rights, this study focuses on gauging the educational impact of these representations. It delves into how these cinematic narratives may contribute to a nuanced understanding of legal realities and constitutional principles among audiences. In essence, it endeavours to provide a comprehensive perspective on how Tamil cinema grapples with legal themes concerning children, questioning whether these cinematic narratives align with the constitutional safeguards designed to protect the rights and well-being of the younger generation in India.

To examine how legal narratives about children's rights are portrayed in Tamil cinema, it is crucial to refer to pertinent acts and provisions of Indian constitutional law that are notably relevant to children. The following significant laws and clauses from the Constitution can serve as a foundation for examining fictional portrayals. Here are the Acts implemented by the Indian Constitutional Law to safeguard and protect children from society, Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 outlines the procedures and safeguards for children in conflict with the law, Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012.

Examines how the films address issues related to child sexual abuse and exploitation, aligning the analysis with the provisions outlined in the POCSO Act. Right to Education (RTE) Act, 2009 Evaluates the cinematic representation of children's access to education and educational rights, which ensures free and compulsory education for all children in the age group of 6 to 14. Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Amendment Act, 2016, it explores how the films address the issue of child labor and whether they align with the amended provisions regulating and prohibiting child labour.

National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR), which references the functions and responsibilities of the NCPCR, as outlined in the Commissions for Protection of Child Rights (CPCR) Act, 2005, and assesses how the cinematic narratives reflect or deviate from these roles. United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), Considers the cinematic portrayal of children's rights in the broader international context by referencing the UNCRC, to which India is a signatory. Evaluate how the films align with the principles outlined in this convention. Child Welfare Committees (CWC) and Juvenile Justice Boards (JJB), this act examines the cinematic representation of these institutions, which play crucial roles in the protection and rehabilitation of children, and assesses whether the films accurately depict their functions and significance.

In conclusion, Tamil cinema, exemplified by influential films such as *Ponmagal Vandhal*, *Vazhakku Enn 18/9*, and *Chithha* serves as a powerful conduit for imparting legal awareness to children. These cinematic masterpieces intricately weave narratives that not only entertain but also educate, offering young minds a poignant exploration of Indian constitutional law. As children become witnesses to the legal intricacies portrayed on screen, they inevitably encounter real-world acts and provisions that safeguard their rights and strive to prevent crimes across India. The cinematic journey transcends mere entertainment, fostering a generation attuned to the legal foundations shaping societal norms. These films not only heightened legal consciousness but also stimulated vital discussions on the implementation of legal safeguards and the societal responsibility to create a safer environment for children. In essence, Tamil cinema emerges as a pioneering force, facilitating a profound connection between the cinematic realm and legal awareness, leaving an indelible impact on the evolving societal discourse surrounding children's rights and safety.

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## **Through The Auteur's Eyes: Decoding the Feminine Mystique in ManiRatnam's Classic *Mouna Ragam***

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### **Abstract**

Mani Ratnam stands as a luminary in the legacy of Indian cinema, renowned for his unparalleled storytelling prowess, nuanced characterizations, and an aesthetic sensibility that transcends cultural and linguistic boundaries. This research article delves into the cinematic oeuvre of acclaimed Indian filmmaker Mani Ratnam through the lens of Auteur Theory, focusing on the varied representation of uncompromising female characters in his diverse filmography. Auteur Theory posits the director as the primary creative force behind a film and provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the directorial signature, thematic coherence, and character intricacies across a filmmaker's body of work. The study conducts a qualitative analysis of select Mani Ratnam movies by providing valuable insights into Mani Ratnam's status as an auteur, examining how his directorial choices offer an intricate perspective on the evolving dynamics of gender representation in Indian cinema.

Additionally, the research considers the audience and critical responses to the characters in ManiRatnam's films and sheds light on the reception of his auteur-driven vision. The Investigation encompasses a comprehensive review of his iconic works such as *Mouna Ragam* (1986), *Kannathil Muthamittal* (2002), and *O Kadhal Kanmani* (2015). The analysis will look into the portrayal of women in these films, exploring how their roles contribute to the broader socio-cultural discourse and challenge traditional gender norms.

**Keywords:** Auteur, Indian cinema, ManiRatnam, women narratives.

As a towering personality whose impact spans generations, Mani Ratnam occupies a special and enduring place in the world of Tamil cinema. Mani Ratnam known for his Inventive storytelling and outstanding cinematography, has constantly pushed the limits of the field by bringing fresh storytelling approaches and a wide range of themes. His films have received critical praise and established new benchmarks for excellence in Tamil cinema. With a dedication to captivating storytelling that connects with viewers, Ratnam's work delves deeply and sensitively into socially relevant themes.

Further, his long-lasting partnership with A. R. Rahman, the master of soundtrack creation, has resulted in legendary compositions that elevate the cinematic experience.

Beyond his films, Mani Ratnam has played a pivotal role in shaping the trajectory of Tamil cinema. His ability to balance artistic integrity with commercial success has set a standard for filmmakers in the industry. The enduring appeal of his work lies in its ability to connect with audiences on a profound level, transcending linguistic and cultural boundaries. As a director with a career spanning several decades, Ratnam continues to inspire aspiring filmmakers, contributing significantly to the growth and evolution of Indian cinema.

Mani Ratnam is undeniably an auteur in the realm of Indian cinema, particularly in the context of Tamil cinema. An auteur, according to film theory, is a director who leaves a distinctive and personal stamp on their work, expressing a unique artistic vision and style.

Auteur theory is a film criticism concept that originated in France in the mid-20th century and emphasizes the director as the primary creative force behind a film. The term "auteur" is

French for "author," and in the context of film, it suggests that a director's work reflects their artistic vision and style, making them the "author" of the film.

Auteur theory, a significant concept in film criticism and theory, originated in France during the mid-20th century. The term "auteur" is French for "author," and auteur theory posits that the director is the primary creative force behind a film, akin to an author's role in literature. The theory emerged in the 1950s and was championed by critics associated with the French film journal "Cahiers du Cinéma," notably a group of critics, including Francois Truffaut, Jean-Luc Godard, and Claude Chabrol. They advocated for auteurism and argued that directors should be considered the true authors of films. Truffaut's article "A Certain Tendency in French Cinema" (1954) is often credited as a catalyst for auteur theory.

Auteur theory posits that a director's films will showcase a consistent and recognizable style, often evident in visual elements, narrative themes, or character types. This style reflects the director's unique artistic sensibilities. They often explore specific themes or subjects across their body of work. These recurring themes provide insight into the director's preoccupations and interests. Further, the Auteur theory acknowledges the director's technical proficiency and control over various aspects of filmmaking, such as cinematography, editing, and sound design.

The director is considered the driving force shaping the overall cinematic experience.

It encourages critics to analyze a director's body of work as a whole, rather than evaluating individual films in isolation. This approach emphasizes the director's overall contribution to the cinematic art form. Likewise, they are expected to maintain a degree of consistency in

Their work, allows viewers to identify common threads and stylistic choices across different films. As film studies evolved, scholars expanded the notion of auteurism to include directors outside the traditional canon. The concept broadened to encompass diverse filmmakers and continues to shape discussions about filmmaking and the role of directors, providing a framework for analyzing and appreciating the unique artistic visions of filmmakers across different genres and periods.

Therefore, the Auteur theory offers a method of viewing films through the lens of the director. In his 1962 paper "Notes on Auteur Theory," Andrew Sarris expounded upon three fundamental assumptions that guide the analysis of a director's identity as an auteur or not. These three presumptions are as follows:

1. The initial idea concerns the individual's distinctive or unique style as it relates to their work.
2. Interior meaning constitutes the second premise. The technique to shape the film structure to convey the notion is through interior meaning. Symbolism and subtext provide inner meaning.
3. The third premise is directorial proficiency to contemplate whether he is technically proficient or not.

For the entirety of its existence, Tamil film has been dominated by its stars. It was CV Sridhar who became the first director whose pictures were in high demand by audiences, particularly women, in the 1960s and 1970s. Next to make an impression in the 1970s and 1980s was K Balachander, who was followed in the 1980s and 90s by Bharathiraja. They all contributed a unique and recognizable style of filmmaking to Tamil cinema. Then appeared Mani Ratnam. Before Mani Ratnam, directing entailed assembling theatrical, dialogue-heavy performances and sprinkling song and dance sequences throughout a well-crafted narrative.

He altered the basic definition of direction. It was necessary for this filmmaker to firmly reiterate that cinema is a visual craft.

Mani Ratnam not only had a distinctive style all his own, but he also pioneered the idea of cinema as a medium for directors, where the director's vision is realized through the integration of various aspects like as writing, music, performances, cinematography, editing, and so forth. Thus, the forty-year-old Mani Ratnam era, which commenced in January 1983, is still running strong today.

This paper will analyze the Tamil film *Mouna Ragam* (1986) of Mani Ratnam and evaluate the evolution of his evergreen women character Divya within the theoretical framework of auteur theory. *Mouna Ragam* is a 1986 Tamil-language romantic drama film directed by Mani Ratnam. The film's plot revolves around the central character, Divya (played by Revathi), and explores themes of love, relationships, and societal expectations. Here is a summary of the plot: The story begins with Divya, who is about to enter into an arranged marriage with Chandrakumar (played by Mohan). Divya is not happy about the marriage, as it was arranged against her will. Flashbacks reveal the reasons behind Divya's reluctance. In the flashback, it is revealed that Divya was in love with Manohar (played by Karthik), a charismatic and carefree musician. However, their marriage ends tragically on the day of their wedding when Manohar dies in a car accident. The trauma from the loss of her husband affects Divya deeply, leading to her reluctance to marry Chandrakumar.

As Divya grapples with her past and attempts to move on, she struggles to adjust to her new life with Chandrakumar. He, on the other hand, is aware of Divya's emotional turmoil but is determined to make their marriage work. The film explores the complexities of love, grief, and second chances. As Divya and Chandra Kumar navigate the challenges of their relationship, they must confront the shadows of the past that continue to linger. Ultimately, *Mouna Ragam* delves into the emotional landscape of its characters, depicting their inner conflicts, the impact of societal expectations, and the possibility of healing and finding love again. The film received critical acclaim for its sensitive portrayal of relationships and emotions. The music, composed by Ilaiyaraaja, also played a significant role in the film's success, with the song "Mandram Vandha Thendralukku" becoming particularly popular. *Mouna Ragam* is considered a classic in Tamil cinema and is appreciated for its nuanced storytelling and realistic portrayal of human emotions.

The character of Divya, portrayed by Revathi in "Mouna Ragam," is indeed a notable representation of an empowering woman. Mani Ratnam's auteurist touch is evident in Divya's complex and nuanced characterization. She is not portrayed in simple terms but rather as a multifaceted individual with her own emotions, struggles, and strengths.



Her journey throughout the film reflects on resilience, self-discovery, and asserting her individuality against societal expectations. Divya exhibits independent thinking from the beginning. Her Reluctance towards an arranged marriage and her determination to make her own choices demonstrate her refusal to conform to societal norms that restrict her agency.

In her marriage with Chandrakumar, Divya is initially reserved and distant due to her past traumatic experience with the death of her first love, Manohar. Mani Ratnam has explicitly demonstrated how, despite Divya's strong objections, her family emotionally blackmailed her into marrying CK. When she declares that she wants to study, no one listens, and her father recently suffered a heart attack, so, the whole family blames her even her ten-year-old younger sister, looks at her with reproach, and blames their father's condition on her.

The scene that follows is not unfamiliar to Indian families: a mother emotionally manipulates her daughter by implying that it is a matter of life or death. Did you do this for me? Divya's father asks her the next morning. Nevertheless, he appears content and unconcerned as she kneels next to him and starts to cry. However, Divya is accustomed to being emotionally blackmailed. She's already given in to it once. However, as the narrative progresses, she becomes assertive in expressing her feelings. She challenges the traditional role of a subservient wife, advocating for her Emotional well-being. Despite the emotional turmoil, Divya emerges as emotionally resilient. She confronts her past, allowing herself to grieve and find the strength to move forward.

Further, she navigates societal expectations regarding marriage, widowhood, and the idea of moving on. Her ability to negotiate these expectations on her terms, rather than succumbing to societal pressures, illustrates her empowerment. In one conversation with CK, she refers to the Thaali as a yellow-dyed thread around her neck.

Divya is portrayed as a woman unafraid to express her emotions. Whether it's grieving the loss of her first husband or expressing her reservations about this marriage, her emotional authenticity is a source of strength. What's most intriguing about the movie is how openly it tackles divorce—a taboo subject at the time. When Divya and CK go out together for the first time in the city after they get married, he tells her he wants to get her a gift, but she says all she wants is a divorce. One day later, there's a parcel with divorce papers and anklets wrapped like a gift on the coffee table.

"Select what you desire," says CK. And Divya firmly signs the paperwork after holding the anklets for a few seconds. The pair is requesting a mutual consent divorce seven days after getting married.

The film traces Divya's journey of personal growth and self-discovery. As she confronts her past, reevaluates her present, and contemplates her future, Divya's character evolves. Her self-discovery is integral to her empowerment as an individual. Divya's commitment to her happiness is a defining aspect of her empowerment. Rather than compromising for the sake of societal expectations, she prioritizes her emotional well-being, asserting her agency in matters of the heart. Divya is victimized continuously in the film. Halfway through, even the audience's understanding shifts to CK. However, she refuses to see herself as a victim. After every crisis, her inherent bravery and inner strength of character come out. Things reach a breaking point when Divya, hurt and enraged by his outburst, asks CK to book her tickets and why he is still "keeping her here." Nevertheless, at the railway station, Divya confronts her love for CK, "If you didn't love me, I would have understood. But I know you do. It is your ego that prevents you from admitting it. Fine, I will put my ego aside and admit it. I love you. I am in love with you." These lines are interpreted as an acknowledgment of pride, an expression of assurance, an audacious and transparent proposal, unthinkable from a woman from so long ago.

In conclusion, Divya's characterization in *Mouna Ragam* aligns with the portrayal of an empowering woman. Further, Divya's character is a product of Mani Ratnam's auteurist vision, her independence of thought, emotional resilience, assertiveness in relationships, negotiation of societal expectations, commitment to personal growth, and rejection of stereotypes collectively contribute to a nuanced and empowering representation of female strength and agency in the narrative.

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## **K. Balachander's Trailblazing Portrayal of Women in Tamil Cinema**

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### **Abstract**

The innovative contributions of K. Balachander, a pioneering filmmaker in Tamil cinema, in influencing the portrayal of women in his vast body of work are critically examined in this research article. Balachander has a multi-decade career, and his films are notable for their investigation of women's position in society, progressive storytelling, and complex female characters. The study explores the subtleties of the theme, the intricacies of the characters, and the societal resonance of his cinematic depictions of women, illuminating his revolutionary impact on the gender representation paradigm inside the industry. This research attempts to provide a thorough knowledge of how K. Balachander's imaginative storytelling has left an everlasting mark on the depiction of women in Tamil cinema by analyzing a few films and placing them within the socio-cultural environment. Women-focused movies with strong, self-reliant female leads are becoming more popular, giving actors a chance to show off their skills in positions outside of the norm.

**Keywords:** Women's empowerment; Tamil films; gender norms; diversity; social issues; self-reliant female lead

### **Introduction**

In the annals of Tamil cinema, where traditional narratives often revolve around male protagonists, K. Balachander emerges as a luminary who reshaped the industry's landscape by placing women at the forefront of his storytelling. Through a series of groundbreaking films, Balachander challenged entrenched stereotypes and offered nuanced portrayals of female characters that defied societal norms and empowered audiences across Tamil Nadu. This article explores the visionary director's trailblazing contributions to Tamil cinema, focusing on how his films broke barriers and paved the way for greater representation and empowerment of women on screen. From "Thanneer Thanneer" to "Aval Oru Thodar Kathai," Balachander's cinematic legacy continues to inspire and resonate, highlighting the transformative power of storytelling in challenging conventions and fostering inclusivity in the realm of cinema.

### **Saritha: A Beacon of Resilience in "Thanneer Thanneer"**

In the parched landscape near Kovilpatti, where the harsh realities of rural life intertwine with governmental negligence and bureaucratic red tape, K. Balachander's "Thanneer Thanneer" (1981) unfolds as a poignant exploration of societal apathy.

Through the lens of rural women grappling with the dire consequences of water scarcity, the film transcends mere narrative to become a powerful testament to human resilience.

At the heart of this compelling narrative is Saritha, portrayed with brilliance by the eponymous actress herself. Saritha's character embodies the quintessence of post-feminist resilience, her unwavering determination to fight for her community's rights serving as a beacon of hope amidst despair. Balachander's masterful craftsmanship weaves together a tapestry of struggle and triumph, shedding light on the plight of uneducated rural women while celebrating their indomitable courage in the face of adversity.

Saritha's journey in "Thanneer Thanneer" is a testament to the strength inherent within marginalized communities, particularly women, who bear the brunt of societal neglect. Through her portrayal, Saritha elevates the narrative beyond mere representation, infusing it with depth and authenticity. Her character's resilience resonates with audiences, inspiring empathy and admiration for the struggles faced by rural women in their quest for necessities. As the narrative unfolds, Saritha emerges as a symbol of hope and resilience, rallying her community against insurmountable odds. Her unwavering resolve to confront injustice and demand accountability from those in power serves as a powerful catalyst for change. Through her actions, Saritha transcends the confines of her circumstances, embodying the spirit of empowerment and agency.

In "Thanneer Thanneer," Balachander offers more than just a critique of societal neglect; he presents a compelling narrative of empowerment and resilience. Through Saritha's character, he shines a light on the often-overlooked struggles of rural women, underscoring their inherent strength and resilience in the face of adversity. As the film unfolds, Saritha's journey serves as a poignant reminder of the transformative power of courage and determination in effecting change.

### **Chellamma and Kalki: Redefining Femininity in "Kalki"s**

In the intricate tapestry of relationships and societal norms portrayed in "Kalki" (1996), K. Balachander delves deep into the complexities of marriage, fidelity, and female agency. At the forefront of this narrative stands Geetha's character, Chellamma, a beacon of strength amidst personal turmoil, challenging societal expectations and norms. Chellamma's journey in "Kalki" is one of resilience and self-discovery in the face of patriarchal constraints. As she navigates the intricacies of her tumultuous marriage with the chauvinistic and abusive industrialist Prakash, portrayed by Prakash Raj, Chellamma embodies a quiet strength that defies traditional gender roles.

Despite facing societal pressures and personal turmoil, she refuses to be confined by societal expectations, asserting her agency and autonomy. Central to Chellamma's journey is her friendship with Kalki, portrayed by Shruti, a modern and independent woman who challenges conventional notions of femininity and sexual autonomy. Through their interactions, Balachander offers a post-feminist perspective that advocates for women's right to assert their desires and agency beyond societal expectations. Kalki's influence on Chellamma is transformative, as she encourages her to embrace her own identity and assert her desires.

Their friendship catalyzes Chellamma's journey towards self-discovery and empowerment, as she learns to navigate the complexities of her desires and aspirations. Through Chellamma and Kalki's relationship, Balachander highlights the importance of female solidarity and empowerment in the face of patriarchal oppression. Their bond transcends societal norms and expectations, offering a powerful commentary on the transformative power of friendship and self-discovery. In "Kalki," Balachander crafts a narrative that challenges traditional gender roles and celebrates the resilience and agency of women. Through Chellamma and Kalki's journey, he offers a compelling exploration of female empowerment and solidarity, advocating for women's right to assert their desires and agency in a society fraught with patriarchal norms.

### **Kavitha's Struggle: A Reflection of Societal Pressures in "Aval Oru Thodar Kathai"**

In the male-centric landscape of 1970s Tamil cinema, K. Balachander's "Aval Oru Thodar Kathai" (1974) stands as a groundbreaking testament to the director's penchant for defying societal norms and placing women at the forefront of his narratives. At the heart of this seminal film lies the character of Kavitha, portrayed with depth and nuance by Sujatha, whose journey serves as a poignant reflection of the societal pressures and expectations placed upon women.

Kavitha emerges as the sole breadwinner of her dysfunctional family, shouldering the immense responsibility of providing for her loved ones amidst challenging circumstances. Balachander's portrayal of Kavitha transcends mere representation, offering a nuanced exploration of the societal constraints that govern women's lives in patriarchal societies.

Despite her strength and resilience, Kavitha finds herself trapped in a cycle of selflessness and sacrifice, her worth measured solely by her ability to provide for her family. Balachander's masterful storytelling delves deep into the complexities of Kavitha's character, offering a compelling exploration of the intersecting forces of tradition, patriarchy, and societal expectations that shape her identity and experiences.

As Kavitha navigates the challenges of her daily life, audiences are confronted with the harsh realities of gender inequality and the pervasive nature of patriarchal norms.

In "Aval Oru Thodar Kathai," Balachander presents a powerful commentary on the resilience and strength of women in the face of adversity, while also shedding light on the systemic injustices that perpetuate gender inequality. Through Kavitha's journey, he challenges audiences to question societal norms and expectations, ultimately advocating for a more inclusive and equitable society where women are free to define their own worth beyond traditional gender roles. The Hindu wrote, "*Aval Oru Thodarkadhai* is a film that will stay with you forever – the invincible heroine was a big draw. And with AOT, Sujatha arrived! As the eldest daughter, who bears the onus of supporting a large family, she came up with a memorable performance. Her matter-of-fact approach to life was very fresh for Tamil audiences, who sang paeans to KB's creative stroke".

### **The Duality of Femininity: Kavitha and Chandra in the World of "Aval Oru Thodar Kathai"**

In K. Balachander's "Aval Oru Thodar Kathai," the characters of Kavitha and Chandra represent contrasting facets of femininity, navigating the complexities of societal expectations and individual agency within the patriarchal framework of 1970s Tamil Nadu. Through their nuanced characterizations, Balachander challenges entrenched stereotypes and offers a thought-provoking exploration of gender dynamics. Kavitha, portrayed by Sujatha, embodies the archetype of the dutiful daughter and provider, shouldering the burdens of her family's financial struggles with stoic resolve. Her pragmatic approach to life reflects her adherence to traditional gender roles, where women are expected to prioritize familial obligations above personal aspirations. Despite her resilience, Kavitha's portrayal exposes the societal pressures that confine women to narrow definitions of worth, perpetuating the notion that their value lies solely in their ability to fulfill familial responsibilities.

In stark contrast, Chandra, portrayed by 'Fatafat' Jayalakshmi, exudes an aura of liberation and free-spiritedness, defying societal expectations with her unapologetic embrace of modernity. Her character challenges traditional gender norms, embodying a sense of individual agency and autonomy that stands in stark contrast to Kavitha's pragmatic conformity. Through Chandra, Balachander highlights the dichotomy between societal expectations and individual empowerment, offering a compelling commentary on the constraints placed upon women's autonomy and self-expression. Balachander's films catalyze redefining gender norms and fostering inclusivity in Tamil cinema.

By juxtaposing Kavitha and Chandra's contrasting experiences, he prompts audiences to critically examine societal expectations and the impact of patriarchal structures on women's lives. Through nuanced characterizations and thought-provoking narratives, Balachander's legacy continues to inspire a new generation of filmmakers, paving the way for greater representation and empowerment of women on screen. As audiences reflect on Balachander's trailblazing contributions, they are reminded of the transformative power of cinema in reshaping societal norms and fostering inclusivity. Through Kavitha and Chandra's duality of femininity, Balachander challenges audiences to envision a world where women are free to define their own identities and chart their paths, unencumbered by societal expectations and gendered constraints.

## Conclusion

In the rich tapestry of Tamil cinema, K. Balachander emerges as a visionary who defied conventions and placed women at the forefront of his storytelling. Through iconic films like "*Thanneer Thanneer*," "*Kalki*," and "*Aval Oru Thodar Kathai*," Balachander reshaped the cinematic landscape by offering nuanced portrayals of female characters that challenged stereotypes and empowered audiences across Tamil Nadu. In "*Thanneer Thanneer*," Balachander skillfully explores themes of societal neglect and bureaucratic apathy through the lens of rural women grappling with water scarcity. Saritha's portrayal as a determined advocate for her community's rights epitomizes post-feminist resilience, celebrating the courage of uneducated rural women in the face of adversity. Similarly, "*Kalki*" delves into the complexities of marriage, fidelity, and female agency, with characters like Chellamma and Kalki challenging conventional notions of femininity and sexual autonomy. Through their interactions, Balachander offers a post-feminist perspective that advocates for women's right to assert their desires beyond societal expectations.

In the male-centric landscape of 1970s Tamil cinema, Balachander's "*Aval Oru Thodar Kathai*" stood as a groundbreaking film that centered on Kavitha, highlighting the societal pressures placed upon women to fulfill traditional gender roles. The juxtaposition of Kavitha's pragmatic approach with her friend Chandra's liberated persona underscores the dichotomy between societal expectations and individual agency. Through nuanced characterizations and thought-provoking narratives, Balachander challenged entrenched stereotypes and offered a nuanced exploration of gender dynamics. His legacy continues to inspire a new generation of filmmakers, paving the way for greater representation and empowerment of women in Tamil cinema.

As audiences reflect on Balachander's trailblazing contributions, they are reminded of the transformative power of cinema in reshaping societal norms and fostering inclusivity on screen. Balachander's legacy serves as a beacon of hope, inspiring future generations to continue the journey toward a more inclusive and equitable cinematic landscape.

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## **Transformative Decades: Realistic Portrayals of Women in Tamil Cinema (1980s - 1990s)**

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### **Abstracts**

This retrospective analysis delves into the pivotal era of Tamil cinema during the 1980s and 1990s, marked by the emergence of actresses such as Revathi, Suhasini Maniratnam, and Radhika, who played instrumental roles in steering the industry to more authentic and nuanced representations of women. The epoch witnessed a departure from stereotypical portrayals, as these actresses embraced characters with depth and complexity.

The cinematic landscape was reshaped with films like "Mouna Ragam" (1986) and "Roja" (1992), where storytelling transcended traditional norms. These movies not only explored intricate emotions and relationships but also granted prominence to female characters, portraying them as central figures in the narrative. The characters portrayed by actresses during this period were no longer confined to conventional roles but evolved into individuals with their own identities, struggles, and aspirations.

This study seeks to illuminate the transformative impact of these cinematic endeavors on the perception of women in Tamil cinema. It examines how the exploration of complex emotions and relationships laid the foundation for a more realistic and inclusive representation of women, setting the stage for future generations of actresses to challenge stereotypes and contribute to the industry's ongoing evolution. Through an exploration of key films and performances, this analysis aims to capture the essence of a cinematic era that played a pivotal role in shaping a more diverse and authentic portrayal of women in Tamil cinema.

**Key Words:** Authentic representation, nuanced portrayals, departure from stereotypes, *Mouna Ragam* (1986), *Roja* (1992), storytelling norms, female characters, central figures, complex emotions, relationship exploration, identity, struggles, aspirations

## Introduction

The two transformative decades of the 1980s and 1990s stand out as a defining era in the vibrant tapestry of Tamil cinema, particularly for the profound changes in the portrayal of women on the silver screen. This period witnessed the emergence of iconic actresses, including Revathi, Suhasini Maniratnam, and Radhika, whose indelible contributions played pivotal roles in reshaping the narrative landscape of the industry. This retrospective analysis seeks to delve into the intricacies of this transformative period, aiming to illuminate the paradigm shift from entrenched stereotypes to more nuanced and authentic representations of women in Tamil cinema.

## Cinematic Evolution and Influential Actresses

The 1980s and 1990s were marked by a palpable sense of change, not only in the socio-cultural milieu but also within the realms of Tamil cinema. Actresses such as Revathi, Suhasini Maniratnam, and Radhika Roseto are prominence, not merely as glamorous faces but as formidable talents capable of infusing depth and authenticity into their portrayals. These actresses, through their choice of roles and performances, played instrumental roles in steering Tamil cinema away from the confines of traditional stereotypes that had long pigeonholed female characters into predictable molds.

## Breaking Away from Tradition:

The crux of this transformative period lay in the deliberate departure from the stereotypical roles that had long dominated the cinematic narrative. Female characters, once relegated to one-dimensional portrayals as either the docile heroine or the scheming antagonist, began to undergo a metamorphosis. Revathi, Suhasini Maniratnam, and Radhika, among others, dared to challenge the status quo by embracing characters with multifaceted identities, imbuing them with layers of complexity that transcended conventional norms.

## Landmark Films

Within this cinematic revolution, certain films emerged as beacons of change. "*Mouna Ragam*" (1986) and "*Roja*" (1992) stand out as watershed moments that redefined storytelling conventions. These films not only explored intricate emotions and relationships but also elevated female characters to the forefront, positioning them as central figures in the narrative.

The nuanced portrayals in these movies laid the foundation for a more inclusive representation of women, where their characters were no longer relegated to peripheral roles but became individuals with distinct identities, struggles, and aspirations.

### **A Cinematic Exploration of Women's Realities**

The female characters brought to life by these actresses during this period became a mirror reflecting the diverse realities of women. They were no longer limited to the confines of conventional roles; instead, they became conduits for exploring the myriad facets of womanhood. Whether grappling with societal expectations, personal dilemmas, or aspirations beyond the ordinary, these characters became vessels for storytelling that resonated with a broader and more diverse audience.

### **Significance and Ongoing Impact**

The transformative impact of the 1980s and 1990s on the perception of women in Tamil cinema reverberates through the years. This analysis seeks to unravel the lasting significance of this cinematic era, acknowledging its role in empowering subsequent generations of actresses to challenge stereotypes and contribute to the continual evolution of the industry. As we navigate through the nuanced performances and groundbreaking narratives, we embark on a journey to capture the essence of an era that not only marked a departure from the past but also laid the groundwork for a more authentic and inclusive portrayal of women in Tamil cinema.

### **Impact on Perception**

The transformative impact of cinematic endeavors during the 1980s and 1990s on the perception of women in Tamil cinema and society at large is a multifaceted phenomenon. As actresses like Revathi, Suhasini Maniratnam, and Radhika embraced more realistic and layered portrayals of female characters, they catalyzed a shift in audience attitudes and expectations. The industry's departure from traditional stereotypes allowed viewers to connect with the narratives on a deeper level, recognizing the authenticity and relatability of the characters.

These cinematic representations not only challenged preconceived notions about the roles and capabilities of women but also contributed to a broader societal conversation about gender role and expectations.

By showcasing women as individuals with agency, aspirations, and complexities, Tamil cinema began to mirror the evolving ethos of society. Audiences started to demand more from their cinema, seeking narratives that resonated with the diverse experiences and aspirations of women.

Moreover, the impact extended beyond the screen, influencing societal attitudes towards women. The more realistic portrayals in Tamil cinema became a cultural mirror, reflecting and shaping perceptions. This cinematic evolution contributed to dismantling stereotypes and fostering a more nuanced understanding of women's roles in both reel and real life.

### **Legacy and Ongoing Evolution**

The legacy of the 1980s-1990s cinematic era on Tamil cinema is enduring and transformative. Actresses who spearheaded this revolution not only left an indelible mark on the industry but also laid the groundwork for future generations to challenge stereotypes and contribute to the ongoing evolution of Tamil cinema.

The cinematic landscape shaped by Revathi, Suhasini Maniratnam, and Radhika opened doors for actresses to explore a diverse range of roles. It dismantled the rigid confines of the past, allowing women to be protagonists in their own stories, with narratives that extended beyond the traditional arcs. The legacy of this era can be seen in the diversity of roles offered to actresses today, showcasing a range of characters that reflect the intricacies of womanhood.

Furthermore, the impact of the 1980s-1990s era can be traced to the industry's increasing sensitivity towards gender representation. Filmmakers and writers have become more attuned to the importance of authentic and empowering portrayals of women. This legacy acts as a guiding force, encouraging filmmakers to challenge stereotypes and create narratives that resonate with the evolving perspectives of contemporary audiences.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the 1980s-1990s stand as a pivotal era in the annals of Tamil cinema, where the portrayal of women underwent a transformative shift. The actresses of this period, through their compelling performances and nuanced characterizations, played a crucial role in shaping a more diverse and authentic representation of women. The impact on audience perception was profound, as cinematic narratives began to reflect and influence societal attitudes towards women.

The legacy of this era is evident in the continued evolution of Tamil cinema. Actresses today stand on the shoulders of those who challenged conventions, enjoying the freedom to portray a wide spectrum of characters.

The contributions of the 1980s-1990s actresses remain embedded in the industry's DNA, acting as a constant reminder of the power of storytelling to challenge stereotypes and foster a more inclusive cinematic landscape. As the journey of Tamil cinema continues, the echoes of this transformative era continue to resonate, shaping narratives that reflect the diverse and authentic experiences of women.

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## **The Journey of Gold Women: Female Heroes of Tamil Cinema**

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### **Abstract**

"The Journey of Gold Women: Female Heroes of Tamil Cinema" is a compelling exploration of the transformative roles and narratives of women in Tamil cinema. This documentary chronicles the evolution of female protagonists, fondly referred to as 'Gold Women,' tracing their journey from stereotypical portrayals to empowered, multidimensional characters. The narrative unfolds through interviews with influential actresses, directors, and industry insiders who have played pivotal roles in reshaping the representation of women in Tamil cinema. The documentary provides a nuanced perspective on the challenges faced by these trailblazing women and highlights their contributions to breaking traditional molds. From the early years of Tamil cinema, where women were often relegated to conventional roles, to the contemporary era marked by a surge in progressive storytelling, the film captures the industry's dynamic shift. It showcases iconic moments in film history, emphasizing landmark productions that challenged societal norms and celebrated the strength, intellect, and independence of female characters. Through a blend of personal anecdotes, behind-the-scenes insights, and critical analyses, "The Journey of Gold Women" not only pays tribute to the courage and resilience of these cinematic icons but also examines their profound impact on shaping perceptions of women in both the film industry and society at large. Ultimately, the documentary serves as a celebration of the indelible mark left by Gold Women on Tamil cinema, inspiring continued efforts towards inclusivity and diverse storytelling in the evolving landscape of Indian cinema.

**Keywords:** Cinema evolution, women's role, gold women, history

### **Introduction**

For far too long, the landscape of Tamil cinema has been dominated by narratives driven by the male gaze, relegating women to roles of damsels in distress, idealized objects of beauty, or sidekicks who exist solely to prop up the hero's journey. But amidst these traditional tropes, a flicker of gold has always glimmered, igniting stories where women defy stereotypes and claim their agency. These are the Gold Women, heroines who carve their destinies, challenge societal norms, and rewrite the rules of storytelling, leaving an indelible mark on the hearts and minds of generations of Tamil audiences.

## **From Damsels to Darlings: A Historical Excavation of The Gold Women**

Tamil cinema's silver screen, once dominated by melodramatic damsels and idealized beauties, has undergone a revolutionary transformation. Rising from the ashes of stereotypical narratives, a generation of heroines - the Gold Women - have forged their paths, rewriting the rules of cinematic storytelling and leaving an indelible mark on the hearts and minds of audiences. But their journey is not a singular leap; it's a meticulously carved legacy, paved with the struggles and triumphs of those who came before.

### **Early Glimmers: Seeds of Rebellion in the Golden Age (1950s-1970s)**

While the 1950s may have been an era of vibrant songs and larger-than-life heroes, it also nurtured the seeds of female agency. Actresses like Savitri and Saroja Devi breathed life into characters who transcended the limitations of their scripts. Savitri's Kannagi in "Silappadhikaram" (1956) is an icon of righteous wrath, her journey fuelled by a fire that defied societal expectations. Similarly, Saroja Devi, through films like "Parasakthi" (1952) and "Saradha" (1953), showcased women who were both nurturing and fiercely independent, possessing an untapped strength waiting to be unleashed. These were the sparks, igniting the embers of change that would later become a blazing inferno.

### **Revolution Rising: Breaking the Mould in the 1980s and 90s**

The social and political upheavals of the 1980s and 90s reverberated on the silver screen, giving rise to a new breed of heroines. Actresses like Sridevi, Raadhika, and Revathi refused to be relegated to the sidelines. Sridevi in "Moondru Mudichu" (1976) and "Nayakan" (1987) embodied a vivaciousness and self-reliance that was a stark contrast to the demure damsels of earlier times. Raadhika, through films like "Nizhalgal" (1980) and "Kizhakke Pogum Rail" (1992), tackled controversial social issues head-on, championing women's right to choose their destinies. Revathi, with her nuanced portrayals in "Ratha Dhanur" (1990) and "Gunaa" (1991), offered glimpses of women who were vulnerable yet strong, navigating the complexities of life while pushing for societal change. These heroines redefined femininity, proving that women could be the driving force of their narratives.

### **Millennium Metamorphosis: Redefining Heroism in the New Age**

The dawn of the new millennium marked a seismic shift in the landscape of female characters. Nayanthara, Trisha, and Anushka Shetty emerged as torchbearers, dismantling traditional notions of femininity and rewriting the hero's narrative. Nayanthara, from the fiery boxer in "Arundhati" (2009) to the fiercely independent cop in "Kaithi" (2019), redefined action heroines, proving that strength and vulnerability can coexist on the silver screen.

Trisha, with her diverse roles in "Manmadan" (2004) and "Thegidi" (2014), embraced both glamour and grit, showcasing the multifaceted nature of the modern woman. Anushka Shetty, through her iconic roles in "Arundhati" (2008) and "Baahubali" (2015), shattered the glass ceiling, leading the charge on the battlefield and in the narrative. These Gold Women demonstrated that heroism was not just about physical prowess but also about resilience, intelligence, and unwavering determination.

### **Contemporary Constellation: Pushing Boundaries and Sparking Conversations**

The tapestry of Gold Women continues to unfold with contemporary heroines like Samantha Ruth Prabhu, Taapsee Pannu, and Jyothika, who are unafraid to push the boundaries even further. Samantha in "The Family Man" (2019) and "Jaanu" (2020) delves into the complexities of motherhood and mental health, offering characters who are deeply flawed yet fiercely real. Taapsee, through her performances in "Aadai" (2019) and "Soorarai Pottru" (2020), champions women's right to ambition and career aspirations, dismantling stereotypes and celebrating individuality. Jyothika, with her powerful turn in "Kaathalaal" (2019), tackles domestic abuse and female agency, paving the way for deeper conversations about social issues. These heroines reflect the contemporary woman, embracing both her struggles and triumphs.

### **The Road Ahead: Embracing Diversity and Nurturing New Voices**

While significant strides have been made, there is still much ground to cover. The industry must continue to embrace diversity in its storytelling, showcasing women from all walks of life and highlighting their unique experiences. It is essential to nurture new voices, providing opportunities for female writers, directors, and producers to share their perspectives and shape the future of Tamil cinema.

### **The Golden Age Awaits: A Future Filled with Limitless Possibilities**

The journey of the Gold Women is a reminder that change is possible, and that progress can be made when we dare to challenge the status quo. As we look to the future, we must continue to celebrate the achievements of these heroines and use their stories as a springboard to create an even more inclusive and diverse cinematic landscape. The Golden Age of Tamil cinema awaits, an era where women take center stage, not as mere ornaments but as architects of their destinies, where their stories are not just tolerated but celebrated, and where their voices are amplified, resonating with audiences across the globe. This is the future we must strive for, a future where the Gold Women shine brighter than ever before.



## Conclusion

The journey of the Gold Women is a testament to the power of storytelling and the indomitable spirit of women who refuse to be defined by societal limitations. From the early rebels to the contemporary trailblazers, these heroines have carved a path of progress, inspiring generations of actresses and audiences alike. Their stories have sparked important conversations, challenged stereotypes, and expanded the possibilities of what it means to be a woman in Tamil cinema and society.

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## **Empowered Portrayals of Women in Tamil Cinema: A Cinematic Metamorphosis**

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### **Abstract**

This study investigates the dynamic interplay between Tamil cinema and societal changes, focusing on the evident cultural shifts mirrored in the film industry. Spanning several decades, the analysis highlights key thematic transitions, narrative innovations, and character developments that underscore the evolving cultural landscape. The exploration commences with an examination of early Tamil cinema, marked by traditional portrayals of gender roles and social norms. Subsequently, it traces the transformative journey through the decades, pinpointing pivotal moments that reflect changing attitudes, values, and cultural paradigms.

Noteworthy shifts are observed in the portrayal of women, where characters evolve from passive stereotypes to multifaceted individuals with agency and independence. The study delves into seminal films and performances that have contributed to this transformation, acknowledging the roles played by influential actors, directors, and writers in challenging traditional norms. Themes related to caste, religion, and social justice also come under scrutiny, as Tamil cinema grapples with these complex issues. The analysis explores how filmmakers navigate and contribute to conversations around identity, discrimination, and inclusivity, reflecting the broader cultural dialogue.

Furthermore, the study addresses the impact of globalization and technological advancements on storytelling, aesthetics, and thematic choices within Tamil cinema. The advent of the digital era has not only expanded the arch of Tamil films but has also influenced narrative styles and audience expectations.

Through an interdisciplinary approach, incorporating film studies, sociology, and cultural analysis, this research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the cultural shifts depicted in Tamil cinema. By scrutinizing cinematic trends, character arcs, and thematic choices, this study offers insight into how Tamil cinema both shapes and responds to the evolving cultural dynamics of its audience.

**Keywords:** Globalization, technological advancements, storytelling, aesthetics, thematic choices, digital era, interdisciplinary approach, film studies, sociology, cultural analysis, cinematic trends, audience expectations.

## **Introduction**

Tamil cinema, a vibrant tapestry interwoven with narratives and visual artistry, stands as a poignant mirror reflecting the ebbs and flows of societal ethos throughout its storied history. This study embarks on a nuanced exploration, akin to a cultural odyssey, delving into the symbiotic relationship between Tamil cinema and the ever-changing cultural landscape. The transformative journey, spanning decades, unfolds a rich narrative that transcends mere entertainment, encapsulating profound insights into the cultural pulse of its audience.

## **Evolution from Traditional Portrayals to Contemporary Narratives**

The study initiates its journey by peering into the origins of Tamil cinema, marked by traditional portrayals of gender roles and societal norms. Here, the cinematic canvas mirrors the prevailing attitudes of its time, reflecting a society deeply rooted in tradition. As we traverse through the cinematic epochs, a metamorphosis becomes evident – a transition from the rigid confines of tradition to the liberated realm of contemporary narratives. This shift paves the way for a more inclusive and diverse presentation of the cultural mosaic that is society.

## **Thematic Transitions: Navigating the Cultural Tapestry**

Central to this exploration are the key thematic transitions that act as signposts in Tamil cinema's cultural odyssey. The analysis meticulously dissects these transitions, unraveling the intricate threads of societal changes, cultural values, and evolving perspectives. The tapestry of Tamil cinema is adorned with themes that resonate with the collective consciousness, acting as a reflection of the societal journey through the lens of compelling narratives.

## **Narrative Innovations: Crafting Cultural Paradigms**

As the narrative unfolds, the study delves into the realm of narrative innovations that have been instrumental in shaping cultural paradigms. The evolution of storytelling techniques, unconventional plot structures, and experimental narratives become focal points in understanding how Tamil cinema not only mirrors cultural shifts but actively participates in shaping them. The interplay between storytelling and cultural dynamics emerges as a dynamic force, pushing boundaries and challenging preconceptions.

## **Character Developments: The Cultural Kaleidoscope**

Characters within Tamil cinema serve as vibrant hues in the cultural kaleidoscope. This analysis intricately examines the evolution of characters, particularly focusing on the portrayal of women.

What once were stereotypical roles confined by societal norms have metamorphosed into nuanced and empowered individuals, reflecting the changing roles and aspirations of women in Tamil society. The characters become cultural archetypes, embodying the collective dreams, struggles, and triumphs of the audience.

### **Grapple with Complex Social Issues**

A profound facet of this exploration is the cinematic grappling with complex social issues such as caste, religion, and social justice. Tamil cinema becomes a crucible where these intricate issues are deliberated upon, contributing to a broader cultural dialogue. Filmmakers, through their narratives, navigate the labyrinth of identity, discrimination, and inclusivity, echoing the societal discourse on these critical matters.

### **Impact of Globalization and Technological Advancements**

In the latter chapters of this cultural exploration, the study turns its gaze toward the seismic impact of globalization and technological advancements on Tamil cinema. The digital era unfolds a new chapter, expanding the reach of Tamil films beyond geographical boundaries. The study scrutinizes how technology not only reshapes storytelling and aesthetics but also influences thematic choices, aligning Tamil cinema with the global cultural zeitgeist.

### **Interdisciplinary Approach: A Holistic Lens**

An innovative aspect of this study lies in its interdisciplinary approach, weaving together threads of film studies, sociology, and cultural analysis. This holistic lens provides a comprehensive understanding of the intricate dance between Tamil cinema and cultural shifts. By synthesizing cinematic trends, character arcs, and thematic choices, the study endeavors to unravel the complex and dynamic relationship that defines Tamil cinema's narrative journey.

The trajectory of women's portrayal in Tamil cinema has undergone a profound transformation, evolving from passive stereotypes to multifaceted individuals wielding agency and independence. This section delves into the nuanced exploration of this cinematic metamorphosis, placing a significant focus on the empowered portrayals of women. It navigates through seminal films, impactful performances, and the roles played by influential figures in challenging traditional norms, paving the way for a more empowered representation of women in Tamil cinema.

### **Historical Context: Traditional Stereotypes and Narrative Shifts**

To comprehend the magnitude of the transformation, the study begins by contextualizing the historical scape of women's portrayals in Tamil cinema.

Early portrayals were often confined to traditional stereotypes, where women predominantly served as archetypal figures conforming to societal expectations. However, as societal norms began to evolve, so did the narrative landscape of Tamil cinema. This transition laid the groundwork for a more progressive and authentic representation of women.

### **Evolving Characters: From Passive Stereotypes to Multifaceted Individuals**

The heart of the exploration lies in dissecting the evolution of female characters. Once related to passive stereotypes, women in Tamil cinema have undergone a metamorphosis into multifaceted individuals. These characters are no longer confined to the peripheries of the narrative but assume central roles, each with a distinct voice, aspirations, and a narrative arc that transcends conventional boundaries. The study meticulously analyzes the character trajectories that signify this evolution, offering insights into how these portrayals mirror and contribute to societal shifts.

### **Seminal Films and Influential Performances**

Central to this cinematic evolution are seminal films and impactful performances that have acted as catalysts for change. The study scrutinizes these cinematic milestones, acknowledging the pivotal roles played by actors, directors, and writers in shaping empowered portrayals of women.

Films like "Mouna Ragam" and "Aruvi" are dissected to understand how they defied stereotypes, presenting women as dynamic, resilient, and complex individuals. Influential performances by actresses who breathed life into these characters become focal points in understanding the transformative power of cinema.

### **Roles of Influential Figures: Actors, Directors and Writers**

The study recognizes the influential role played by key figures in the industry – actors, directors, and writers – in challenging traditional norms and contributing to the empowered portrayal of women. Actresses who ventured beyond conventional roles, directors who crafted narratives with depth and authenticity, and writers who penned scripts that resonated with the evolving ethos of society become integral components of this transformative journey. Their decisions, both in front of and behind the camera, have sculpted a new narrative for women in Tamil cinema.

### **Challenging Traditional Norms: The Cinematic Rebellion**

A crucial facet of this exploration involves dissecting instances of cinematic rebellion where traditional norms were actively challenged.

The study examines narratives that defied societal expectations, depicting women who confront challenges, question norms, and carve their paths. This rebellion, showcased through compelling storytelling, becomes a driving force in altering perceptions and fostering a more inclusive representation of women.

### **Impact on Societal Perceptions: Beyond the Silver Screen**

Beyond the confines of the silver screen, the study extends its gaze to the real-world impact of these empowered portrayals. It explores how cinematic narratives influence societal perceptions, challenging ingrained stereotypes and contributing to a broader discourse on gender roles. The study investigates instances where empowered portrayals in Tamil cinema have catalyzed social conversations, influencing the way women are perceived and treated in society.

### **Ongoing Challenges and Future Aspirations**

While acknowledging the strides made, the study candidly addresses ongoing challenges and aspirations for the future. It examines areas where representation can still be improved, emphasizing the need for sustained efforts to break down remaining stereotypes and provide opportunities for women both in front of and behind the camera.

### **Conclusion: Shaping a New Cinematic Paradigm**

In conclusion, the empowered portrayals of women in Tamil cinema signify a cinematic metamorphosis and a cultural paradigm shift. From challenging traditional norms to crafting narratives that resonate with contemporary societal values, Tamil cinema has become a beacon of change. The study encapsulates this transformative journey, celebrating the influential roles played by films, performances, and industry figures in shaping a new cinematic narrative where women are not just characters on screen but powerful agents of change, both in the reel and the real world.

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## **From Screen to Stage: J.Jayalalitha's Cinematic Journey of Empowerment**

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### **Abstract**

This abstract explores the transformative cinematic odyssey of J. Jayalalitha, an iconic figure in Indian politics and cinema. The narrative unfolds the profound impact of her on-screen portrayal on the silver screen, tracing the trajectory of her career from a celebrated actress to a formidable political leader. Jayalalitha's cinematic journey is not merely a reel-life representation but an empowering saga that resonated with millions. Beginning with her breakthrough in the 1960s Tamil film industry, the abstract delves into the roles she essayed on screen that challenged societal norms, portraying strong, independent women. These portrayals were not just artistic expressions but became a source of inspiration for women across generations. The study further elucidates the transition from the world of cinema to the political stage, where Jayalalitha continued her quest for empowerment. Examining the socio-cultural context of her time, the abstract elucidate show Jayalalitha's cinematic journey mirrored and influenced the evolving role of women in Indian society. Her foray into politics, marked by resilience and determination, is dissected to unveil the intersection of reel and real-life empowerment. By intertwining her cinematic and political legacy, the abstract presents a comprehensive understanding of J.Jayalalitha's indelible mark on the collective consciousness, illustrating how her journey from screen to stage became a symbol of empowerment and aspiration.

**Keywords:** J. Jayalalitha, cinematic journey, empowerment, political transition, societal impact

### **Introduction**

J. Jayalalitha, affectionately known as "Amma" to her supporters, transcended the realms of both cinema and politics, leaving an indelible mark on the social and cultural fabric of Tamil Nadu. While her political tenure as the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu garnered widespread acclaim, it was her formative years in Tamil cinema that laid the foundation for her iconic status as a leader of empowerment. Through her prolific career on the silver screen, Jayalalitha not only captivated audiences with her magnetic performances but also utilized her platform to champion the cause of empowerment, both on and off-screen.



This essay delves into the multifaceted contributions of Jayalalitha in Tamil cinema, highlighting how her portrayal of strong female characters, engagement with inspiring storylines, and cultural influence paved the way for her transformative journey from a beloved actress to a revered political figure.

### **Portrayal of Strong Female Characters: A Catalyst for Empowerment**

In the tapestry of J. Jayalalitha's illustrious acting career, one defining thread was her consistent portrayal of strong female characters. Amidst an era when Indian cinema predominantly adhered to traditional gender norms and stereotypes, Jayalalitha's on-screen personas stood as beacons of change. Her characters were not mere reflections of societal expectations but rather, bold departures challenging the status quo.

Through her roles, Jayalalitha breathed life into characters who were not confined by conventional gender roles. These women were more than just protagonists; they were architects of their destinies, challenging the limits society imposed upon them. Whether it was in the face of adversity, navigating complex relationships, or confronting societal prejudices, Jayalalitha's characters showcased resilience, strength, and unwavering determination.

Moreover, her portrayal of assertive, intelligent, and capable women transcended the confines of the cinematic world. It became a mirror reflecting the aspirations and capabilities of women off-screen. In a society where women often found themselves relegated to predetermined roles, Jayalalitha's characters became empowering symbols. They encouraged women to embrace their strength, intellect, and independence, fostering a collective spirit of empowerment beyond the realms of the movie theater.

Jayalalitha understood the power of narrative in shaping societal perceptions. Her deliberate choice of roles signaled a departure from the stereotypical, passive portrayals of women that dominated the cinematic landscape. By consistently embodying characters who challenged norms, she became a catalyst for change, inspiring a generation to question and redefine the roles assigned to women in both cinema and society.

Jayalalitha's commitment to portraying strong female characters transcended entertainment; it became a form of activism, contributing significantly to the broader discourse on gender empowerment. Her characters were not just figments of imagination on the silver screen; they were transformative agents, propelling the audience towards a more inclusive and egalitarian understanding of women's roles in society.

### **Inspiring Storylines: Illuminating Social Realities and Advocating for Change**

Beyond her captivating performances, J. Jayalalitha's cinematic legacy is profoundly marked by the narrative landscapes she traversed.

Many of the films in which she starred served as poignant mirrors reflecting the socio-economic and cultural complexities of Indian society. These storylines weren't merely entertainment vehicles; they were potent instruments for social commentary and advocacy, shedding light on pressing issues such as gender inequality, poverty, and injustice.

Jayalalitha's choice of roles often aligned with narratives that delved deep into the struggles faced by marginalized communities, particularly women. Whether it was portraying the challenges of a single mother fighting societal stigma or the resilience of a woman navigating the intricacies of a patriarchal society, her characters served as conduits for storytelling that resonated with the realities of countless individuals.

Through these narratives, Jayalalitha didn't shy away from confronting uncomfortable truths. Instead, she fearlessly tackled issues that were often relegated to the shadows of societal discourse. By bringing these stories to the forefront, she compelled audiences to confront the harsh realities faced by marginalized communities, fostering empathy and understanding.

Jayalalitha's roles weren't passive observers of injustice; they were agents of change. Her characters embodied the spirit of resilience and defiance, inspiring audiences to challenge prevailing norms and strive for a more equitable society. Whether it was through acts of defiance against oppression or moments of quiet strength in the face of adversity, her characters served as beacons of hope and catalysts for transformation.

Jayalalitha's commitment to addressing social issues extended beyond the screen. She used her platform and influence to advocate for meaningful change, championing causes that aligned with the themes portrayed in her films. Through her activism and philanthropy, she sought to address the root causes of inequality and injustice, leaving an indelible impact on the communities she served.

Jayalalitha's inspiring storylines transcended the boundaries of cinema, sparking conversations, challenging perceptions, and igniting movements for social change. Her films weren't just artistic expressions; they were rallying cries for a more just and equitable society, carrying forward her legacy as a champion of empowerment and advocacy.

## **Cultural Influence: Bridging Cinema and Society**

Tamil cinema, with its rich tapestry of storytelling and vibrant cultural expressions, holds a revered place in the hearts and minds of the people of Tamil Nadu.

It serves not only as a source of entertainment but also as a mirror reflecting the values, aspirations, and struggles of society. In this cultural milieu, J. Jayalalitha emerged as a towering figure, leveraging her popularity as a film actress to forge deep connections with the masses.

Jayalalitha's on-screen persona resonated profoundly with audiences, transcending the boundaries of the cinematic world to permeate the fabric of society. Her portrayal of strong, principled women struck a chord with viewers, who saw in her characters reflections of their hopes, dreams, and aspirations. Whether it was through her unwavering resolve in the face of adversity or her steadfast commitment to justice, Jayalalitha's characters embodied the virtues cherished by Tamil Nadu's populace.

Moreover, Jayalalitha's cultural influence extended beyond the confines of cinema to encompass various facets of society. Her philanthropic endeavors, advocacy for social causes, and engagement with grassroots initiatives endeared her to the people, earning her admiration and respect beyond the silver screen. Her presence in the public consciousness was not limited to her roles in films but rather permeated all aspects of Tamil Nadu's cultural landscape.

## **Iconic Status: From Silver Screen to Political Arena**

Jayalalitha's transition from a celebrated actress to a formidable political figure is a testament to the enduring impact of her contributions to Tamil cinema. Her journey from the silver screen to the political arena exemplifies the seamless integration of art and activism, with her on-screen portrayals laying the groundwork for her transformative leadership in the real world.

As a political leader, Jayalalitha remained true to the principles of empowerment and social justice that defined her cinematic legacy. Her policies and initiatives were informed by the same ethos of resilience, determination, and empathy that characterized her on-screen persona.

Moreover, her unwavering commitment to serving the people of Tamil Nadu earned her the unwavering loyalty and support of millions, who saw in her a beacon of hope and a symbol of empowerment.

Today, Jayalalitha's legacy endures as an iconic leader whose influence transcends generations.

She remains a source of inspiration for many, especially women, who continue to see her as a trailblazer and role model. Her journey from the silver screen to the political arena serves as a powerful reminder of the transformative potential of cinema in shaping the course of history and empowering communities to strive for a better tomorrow.

## **Conclusion**

The empowerment journey of J. Jayalalitha through Tamil cinema stands as a testament to the transformative power of art and storytelling. Her impact was multifaceted, transcending the realms of entertainment to permeate society and catalyze meaningful change.

Firstly, Jayalalitha's portrayal of strong female characters challenged entrenched gender norms, offering audiences empowering representations of women who defied stereotypes and societal expectations. These characters served as inspirational figures, encouraging women to assert their agency and pursue their dreams.

Secondly, her choice of inspiring storylines addressed pressing social issues such as gender inequality, poverty, and injustice. Through these narratives, she shed light on the struggles faced by marginalized communities and advocated for social change. Her films served as platforms for raising awareness and fostering empathy, prompting audiences to question prevailing norms and strive for a more equitable society.

Jayalalitha's impactful performances further amplified the messages conveyed through her films, resonating deeply with audiences and earning her a dedicated fan following. Her ability to bring complex characters to life on the screen humanized issues of empowerment and social justice, making them more accessible and relatable to the masses.

Furthermore, Jayalalitha's cultural influence extended beyond the cinema, with her on-screen persona as a strong, principled woman translating into real-world admiration and respect. This cultural resonance laid the groundwork for her eventual transformation into a formidable political leader, where she continued to champion the causes of empowerment and equality.

Jayalalitha's empowerment through her films was a holistic endeavor, encompassing the portrayal of strong female characters, inspiring storylines, impactful performances, cultural influence, and her eventual transition into politics. Her legacy endures as a powerful reminder of the potential of art to catalyze social change and inspire generations to strive for empowerment and equality.

Through her work in cinema, Jayalalitha left an indelible mark on the collective consciousness of society, enriching hearts and minds with her empowering narratives and enduring spirit.

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## **Evolution of Dynamic and Diverse Female Leads in the Movie “Ponniyin Selvan”**

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### **Abstract**

This article portrays the enigmatic females of the movie 'Ponniyin Selvan', which in its cinematic brilliance was adapted by Mani Ratnam based on the classic Tamil masterpiece written by Kalki Krishnamurti. This monumental film adaptation of the novel intricately portrays the variety of characters known for their complexities. This timeless tale of the Chola empire has richly drawn women characters who have captivated the audience with their wit, power, and charisma. The movie skilfully brings out a diverse range of female characters, each with their distinct personalities. Politics, betrayal, compassion, love, and desire for power contribute to the development of these characters as the movie progresses owing to their depth and enigma. Many female characters in the movie exhibit remarkable strength, both physically and emotionally which defy the commonplace objectification and portrayal of women as mere accessories. Despite the patriarchal society depicted in the novel, many female characters exercise agency and assert themselves in various spheres of life. Thus, these women characters who shape their destiny quintessentially add to the richness of the movie which is elaborated for their nuances in this article.

**Key Words:** Objectification, individualism, narrative, feminism

In the movie "Ponniyin Selvan," women play multifaceted and crucial roles, contributing significantly to the intricate narrative. The novel, set in the Chola dynasty period, portrays a rich tapestry of characters and societal dynamics, and the female characters are no exception.

One of the prominent female characters is Nandhini, known for her enigmatic and complex personality. As the adopted daughter of Periya Pazhuvettarayar, she wields influence and navigates the intricate political landscape. Nandhini's character defies conventional norms; her intelligence and strategic thinking make her an intriguing force. Her intricate relationships with other characters, especially Vandiyathevan and Aditya Karikalan, add layers to the narrative. A counterpart to Nandhini is Kundavai, the elder daughter of Sundara Chola. Kundavai, in contrast, represents the more traditional and regal aspects of womanhood. Her diplomatic skills and commitment to the Chola kingdom showcase the strength and resilience of women in positions of authority during that era. Kundavai's character also explores themes of duty, love, and sacrifice.

Ponniyin Selvan does not confine women to stereotypical roles. Instead, it features diverse female characters, each with a unique voice and agency. The movie portrays women as individuals with distinct personalities, ambitions, and challenges, challenging societal norms of the time. It also delves into the relationships between women, such as the camaraderie between Kundavai and Nandhini, which evolves through the narrative, revealing the complexity of female connections. Additionally, there's the character of Vanathi, a courageous and spirited young woman who contributes to the unfolding events. Her presence adds a layer of romance to the narrative, showcasing a different facet of womanhood. It's essential to acknowledge the societal constraints depicted in the novel, reflecting the historical context. Despite these challenges, the female characters in "Ponniyin Selvan" demonstrate resilience, intelligence, and adaptability.

One of the prominent female characters is Nandhini, known for her enigmatic and complex personality. As the young queen of Periya Pazhuvettarayar, she wields influence and navigates the intricate political landscape. Nandhini's character defies conventional norms; her intelligence and strategic thinking make her an intriguing force. Her intricate relationships with other characters, especially Vandiyathevan and Aditya Karikalan, add layers to the narrative. Nandini is the female protagonist of Ponniyin Selvan, played by Aishwarya Rai in the movie. She is a strong character in the story and is a stunning, brilliant woman. She is the wife of Periya Pazhuvettariyar and is referred to as 'Ilaya Rani' in the story. She is well-recognized for her humour and charm. Nandini is a complicated person and is portrayed as a woman with vile intentions and layers, which is a mystery. She plays a significant role in influencing the events in the story. The conversation between Nandini and Vanthiyathevan was an interesting watch in Ponniyin Selvan.

A counterpart to Nandhini is Kundavai, the elder daughter of Sundara Chola. Kundavai, in contrast, represents the more traditional and regal aspects of womanhood. Her diplomatic skills and commitment to the Chola kingdom showcase the strength and resilience of women in positions of authority during that era. Kundavai's character also explores themes of duty, love, and sacrifice. Kundavai, played by Trisha, is Arulmozhi Varman's (Jayam Ravi) sister. Arulmozhi is the protagonist of Ponniyin Selvan. Kundavai is the daughter of Sundara Chola. Kundavai is referred to as 'Ilayapiratti'. She is a majestic, wise, and popular woman across other kingdoms as well. Kundavai plays an important role in protecting the family and plays a mentor to Arulmozhi Varman. Kundavai, despite being a woman of that age, had free will and was not married off to princes of other kingdoms. She chose not to do so.

Kundavai did not want to get married to any foreign king as she wanted to be in the Chola kingdom. She is quite active in politics and frequently seen advising her brother.

Poonkuzhali is a fearless fisherwoman in Ponniyan Selvan, played by Aishwarya Lekshmi. She saves Arulmozhi Varman when he is attacked by Pandyas in Sri Lanka. She also aids Arulmozhi Varman in his search. The relationship between Arulmozhi and Poonkuzhali is complicated, as it can confuse viewers if it is love or friendship. Poonkuzhali loves Arulmozhi but knows very well that she cannot marry him due to his social status. As compared to other women characters who are princesses or privileged, Poonkuzhali is an independent, ordinary woman and attractive as well. She lives the way she wants, is sweet, and can also kill.

Vanathi is Arulmozhi Varman's wife, shown as Arulmozhi Varman's love interest in Ponniyan Selvan's part 1 movie, played by Sobhita Dhulipala. Vanathi loses her parents at a young age, her mom dies during childbirth, and her father dies in a war in Eelam (Sri Lanka). So, she lives with Kundavai in the palace, who is also a close friend of hers. Vanathi is a woman with a soft heart but is quick-witted and charming. Later she marries Arulmozhi and is a sweet, compassionate woman who encourages her husband in all that he does.

Oomai Rani plays the guardian angel of Arulmozhi Varman. She is a mute person who travels on an elephant played by an older version of Aishwarya Rai. She saves Arulmozhi Varman back when he falls into the Ponni River as a baby. That's why he is called Ponniyan Selvan (Ponni's child). Whenever Arulmozhi is in danger, Oomai Rani makes an appearance to save Arulmozhi. When he was attacked by Pandyas along with Vanthiyathevan and Alwarkadiyan and also when fighting the Pandyas on the ship with Vanthiyathevan. Oomai Rani also known as Mandakini, was a concubine of Sundara Chola in Sri Lanka. But Sundara leaves her with promises to return but never does so. Sundara confides this to Kundavai. Princess Kundhavai does not wait around for her prince to arrive on a white horse. She hopes that such a prince never arrives because marrying him would mean she'd have to leave her beloved Chola Nadu. She's a patriot through and through. To the Chola citizens, she is a benefactor who uses her wealth to build hospitals all over the country. But she is so much more than that: Her father, the king, is bedridden. Her elder brother and the crown prince, Aditha Karikalan, is busy battling his inner demons. Her younger brother, the eponymous Arulmozhi Varman, is disinterested in politics. So at a young age, she takes up the responsibility of navigating the kingdom through dangerous times.



She is ready to risk anything to save her land and her people. But every day, she meets men who ask her to keep her nose out of politics because she is a woman and she hasn't fought wars, unlike them. She is an expert at dealing with them and getting her way without hurting their egos. But when her plans go wrong, she wonders if they are right. Whether she, as a woman, is not fit to handle matters of state.

However, she has been portrayed to have plenty of flaws too. She wants to control the lives of the people she is close to and this leads to some disastrous consequences. She strong-arms her brother in the name of love and wishes for him to be the king when he doesn't want to. She is even called out for being casteist and hypocritical at one point. And that makes her as real as real women get. The writer Kalki in the book, describes her by invoking flowers, stars, and celestial beings, but what you will end up admiring is not her beauty but her brains and benevolence which is illustrated well in the movie.

When Prince Arulmozhi is born, astrologers predict that many dangers will befall him but he will be saved from every one of them, and go on to do great things. The predictions come true. He does get into many life-threatening situations and a strange forty-year-old deaf and mute woman saves him from most of them. The name of this series comes from an incident in which she saves the five-year-old Arulmozhi from drowning in the river Ponni. She is nameless when she is introduced to the readers. In the beginning, she feels like a *deus ex machina*—a guardian angel who goes around pulling the prince out of tricky situations. As the story progresses, she is called Oomai Rani for the time being and she reveals a few things about herself to the prince. This makes her less of a plot device and more of a mystery. She cannot understand what people are saying but she can sense dangers before anyone else can. She is scared of people but she can tame exotic horses and ride them. She is always around to save the prince, but no one knows where she lives. She looks fragile, but she is like the wind and cannot be captured by force. We understand Mandhakini, her motives, and how she is a force of all that is good. Throughout the series, the viewers can explore different kinds of love. At one point, Kundhavai's suffocative, self-serving love meets Mandhakini's selfless, protective love for the same person and it changes Kundhavai for good.

Vaanathi is privileged but without agency. She lets things happen to her. She is supposed to marry the prince because of her family's close ties to the Chola kingdom. She dreams about him and falls in love with him without giving a thought to who he is as a person. She is even ready to kill herself on receiving the news of his death. It's hard to side with her or even empathize with someone like her.

But she made it to this list because she taught me something valuable: There's depth to every person, however vapid they might seem at first glance if you care enough to find out. As the movie goes on, we see Vaanathi grow into someone stronger and take her life into her own hands. We learn why she is the way she is. There is a backstory to what seemed like a love of convenience in the beginning that makes it more organic. When she attempts suicide, it looks like it's because she is dependent on a guy whom she has barely spoken to. But later, we see her ready to sacrifice herself to protect the living prince from danger out of love, not dependency. When she realizes that she is pitted against another woman, a commoner, in her efforts to gain the prince's affection, instead of pulling that woman down, she lifts herself. She is even ready to give up the throne just to prove that her love is not shallow.

Poonguzhali is the definition of a strong, fiercely independent woman. As a boat woman, her favorite thing to do is rowing her boat to Sri Lanka and back, braving the high tides, alone. She does what she likes, speaks her mind, and doesn't take shit from anybody. She is a misanthrope. She especially hates royalty and not without reason. Her aunt, she learns, was wronged by the king and cheated out of the throne she deserved. Poonguzhali's hate increases when the only man she's ever liked, the prince, doesn't like her back. Even saving him from drowning in the hurricane-stricken seas is not enough to bridge the gap between a commoner and a prince, she realizes. This makes her spew venom at Vaanathi, the princess Arulmozhi is supposed to marry. She belittles her love and mocks her fragility. She bullies her incessantly and she inadvertently ends up making Vaanathi stronger. The opposite of what happened with Vaanathi happens with Poonguzhali. You love the character in the beginning for her uncouth, wild ways. But the vindictiveness she develops, though understandable, makes you like her lesser and lesser.

Nandhini, the mysterious, seductive, femme fatale, is the single most important character in *Ponniyin Selvan*. A woman like her, in any Tamil movie now, is usually killed or tamed by the hero in the end. What happens here is refreshingly modern. She lights up a scandal by marrying a sexagenarian strongman of the Chola Empire. But her eyes are set on the crown prince Aditha Karikalan, with whom she has a love-hate relationship. Meaning, she loves him but also wants to kill him. She thinks she is haunted by the ghost of a man who was killed by Adithan while under her protection. Was that the only reason she goes after the Cholas, though? The viewers are never really sure. She patiently plans the downfall of the empire. She is single-handedly responsible for the rise of Pandiya nationalists.

Here, we again see the progression dig deeper into her motives and make her less of a caricature. Though it seems like she is power-hungry and vengeful, we understand that she is a product of her circumstances. Repeatedly wronged by the Cholas since her childhood, she turns the very thing that made her a target into something that could destroy them from within—her looks. Every man who meets her wants her and is ready to do anything to get her. And she uses that power to get closer and closer to her goal. She goes from being an outsider and a nobody to someone who can influence policy and incite wars in a short amount of time. Men who are ensnared by her say that her beauty is her biggest weapon. But what they overlook and eventually pay for, is a sharper weapon that she is constantly honing—her mind. Just like Kundhavai, while her beauty was what she was known for, it's her mind that gets her where she was.

Thus, Ponniyin Selvan does not confine women to stereotypical roles. Instead, it features diverse female characters, each with a unique voice and agency. The novel portrays women as individuals with distinct personalities, ambitions, and challenges, challenging societal norms of the time.

It's essential to acknowledge the societal constraints depicted in the movie and reflect the historical context. Despite these challenges, the female characters in "Ponniyin Selvan" demonstrate resilience, intelligence, and adaptability. In conclusion, the role of women in "Ponniyin Selvan" is multifaceted and integral to the overarching narrative. The diverse portrayal of female characters, from the enigmatic Nandhini to the resilient Poonguzhali, contributes to the richness of the novel. Mani Rathnam's exploration of women's roles in the Chola dynasty era offers readers a nuanced understanding of gender dynamics, societal expectations, and the individual strength of women in the face of adversity, which is a breath of fresh air among the stereotypical women characters in the cinema.

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## **Breaking Barriers: A Critical Analysis of *Raatchasi*'s Impact on Educational Reforms**

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### **Abstract**

This paper undertakes an in-depth of the movie "Raatchasi," analyzing its complex depiction of educational difficulties and its possible influence on reforms in the real world. The heroine of the story, Geetha Rani, is a tenacious advocate working to improve a broken educational system afflicted by structural problems. I examine the film's subtle portrayal of challenges within the educational framework by analyzing its thematic depth, character development, and narrative choices. "Raatchasi" skillfully addresses problems including legal roadblocks, cultural biases, and inadequate infrastructure, offering a clear picture of the larger difficulties the education sector faces. The protagonist's unbreakable desire to spark good change emerges as a central theme, inspiring a critical analysis of how individuals influence educational transformation. This examination evaluates the movie's possible impact on actual educational reforms outside of the stage of cinema and societal prejudices. The significance of these cinematic interventions in promoting public dialogue and inspiring stakeholders to support revolutionary projects is discussed in the article.

In conclusion, it may be said that "Raatchasi" is both a powerful cinematic story and a possible spark for reviving conversations on educational changes. This analysis works through the film's many levels, providing context for its larger social effects and provoking a thoughtful debate about how to change the way that education is provided.

**Keywords:** Cinematic critique, educational challenges, inspirational narratives, real-world reforms, societal prejudices, system issues.

### **Introduction**

"In the compelling film "Raatchasi," an exploration into the intricacies of educational challenges is underway, unraveling a nuanced depiction of a broken system through the lens of the central character, Geetha Rani. This cinematic analysis delves into the movie's thematic depth, character development, and narrative choices, shedding light on the subtle portrayal of issues within the educational framework.

## **Thematic Depth and Character Development**

The film adeptly addresses legal roadblocks, cultural biases, and inadequate infrastructure, vividly painting the multifaceted difficulties plaguing the education sector. Geetha Rani's unwavering advocacy becomes a central theme, highlighting her unbreakable desire to initiate positive change within the flawed system.

## **Narrative Choices and Societal Reflection**

"Raatchasi" strategically employs narrative choices to shed light on the larger societal prejudices permeating the educational landscape. The examination extends beyond the screen to evaluate the movie's potential impact on real-world educational reforms, emphasizing the significance of cinematic interventions in fostering public dialogue and inspiring stakeholders to support revolutionary projects.

## **Influence on Real-world Reforms**

This analysis delves into how "Raatchasi" serves as more than just a cinematic narrative, becoming a potential catalyst for tangible changes in education. By inspiring critical discourse on the influence of individuals in driving educational transformation, the film prompts a thoughtful debate on redefining the way education is provided.

## **Cinematic Critique and Inspirational Narratives**

The article explores the cinematic critique of "Raatchasi," recognizing its role as a powerful narrative that transcends entertainment. Geetha Rani's journey becomes an inspirational narrative, encouraging viewers to reflect on the broader implications of the depicted educational challenges and motivating them to actively engage in discussions on reform.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, "Raatchasi" emerges as both a powerful cinematic story and a catalyst for reviving conversations on educational changes. This analysis provides context for the film's broader social effects, emphasizing its potential to stimulate thoughtful debate and influence real-world reforms.

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## **Feasting on Feelings: The Cinematic Symphony of Food and Emotion**

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### **Abstract**

Food has been a consistent and integral factor in human lives from the dawn of time and as human intelligence developed, they, like in every other aspect, began to look into what they are ingesting more closely in both scientific and emotional manner. The focus here is to correlate the themes of food and visual media, specifically the Tamil film industry. Tamil cinema, known for its rich storytelling and vibrant cultural representation, often weaves narratives that go beyond traditional plotlines. One fascinating aspect that has consistently found its way into the heart of these narratives is the portrayal of food and lifestyle. In this article, we delve into the unique narrating technique employed by Tamil cinema, exploring how it uses the lens of food and lifestyle to not only tell stories but also to reflect the ethos of the Tamil culture

The paper would further widen the aspect of how a person's emotions influence what they are eating and how food and cinema have paved the way for people to better understand how food affects and influences them in a variety of ways. Western cinema motivates to bring forth the connection between food and emotion as seen in the movie *The Whale*. In this movie, the protagonist uses food in a cathartic manner to purge out the emotional trauma he faces due to him losing his partner. The movie dwells on how food and emotions are interconnected with one another, The present paper focuses on better understanding the relationship between human emotions and food.

**Keywords:** Food, emotions, human, movie, culture, women empowerment

### **Introduction**

The aerial perspective of food and humans is incomparable to that of one experienced by the two genders. The female gender prepares food with not only spices and materials available in the market rather they include their emotions of love and concern for the one they cook, be it their child, parent, or their beloved. The paper explores the rich tapestry woven between food and cinema, illuminating the dynamic interconnection that shapes cultural narratives and expressions. The Tamil cinemas have their endorsement and exploration regarding their cultural identity. Considering the recently released Tamil movie *Annapoorni: The Goddess of Food* directed by Nilesh Krishnaa which elaborates on the Tamil food culture with women empowerment. In the movie, the protagonist is portrayed as a person born to a specific community who is required to renounce the consumption of non-vegetarian food, the particular custom of their community is part of their culture and belief and thus has been followed by the protagonist too.

The stringent following of this custom restricts the protagonist from fully dwelling on her passion for mastering culinary arts. By exempting the protagonist's age-old traditions, she follows her passion and while striving through many hardships the protagonist can dominate the field which was pre-dominated by the male gender. The movie *Annapoorni* is an exemplification of woman empowerment, it elaborates on specific scenes where the protagonist has to stand up for herself when faced with misogynistic situations in the commercial kitchen like in restaurants and hotels which are mostly male-dominated whereas the common perception of the populous is that household kitchens should be occupied by the female gender. Tamil cinema imposes on their traditions, customs, and culture from various aspects which also includes food. On the contrary, Western cinemas for the most part emphasize emotions through food.

The movie *The Whale* directed by Darren Aronofsky picturesquely illuminates the audience on this explainable experience through intense scenes and emotional reasoning. The protagonist of the movie is a middle-aged man who has chosen to live a life of isolation after the demise of his beloved, grappled by the loss faced by the protagonist, he finds comfort in food and to numb the overwhelming sadness the protagonist eats and overeats. At times, in particular scenes, it's evident that the food he eats is not merely for his comfort rather the protagonist is unable to express his emotions to anyone who wants to simply suffer in loneliness and overeat until his body can't take it anymore.

### **Sadness**

Throughout the movie, the director and the cast aim to visualize the emotions felt by many in the world, that feeling of overwhelming sadness that prevails most of their daily life, due to reasons specific to each individual. The protagonist of the movie is filled with such an emotion and unable to move forward in life; the hopelessness that he feels is extenuated through various scenes one of which includes his refusal to visit the hospital even after realising that his heart is in weak condition. This portrayal of a large man and the subtle yet strong hints of how he avoids society or going in public for the reason the people will stare at him is a situation that happens in reality and thus is why many overweight people avoid going into public this causes a lonely feeling in them which prompts them to eat more as a means to ease their loneliness/ sadness and thus they are entrapped in a vicious cycle that might slowly lead them to their demise both literally and emotionally.



A human being is always conscious about the way the world and its people perceive, be it even a man like the protagonist of the movie who has lost the will to live, yet he while taking classes keeps the camera off so the students will not judge him; this could be yet another reason why the protagonist avoids people.

### **Hopelessness**

From the perspective of a narrowed vision the act and concept of eating and overeating is considered as humans indulging in what tastes good to the mouth but alas there exists a much more complicated reasoning for this which transverse through the multiple spheres of psychology, science, and literature. “Many people use food as a coping mechanism to deal with such feelings as stress, boredom or anxiety, or even to prolong feelings of joy.” The protagonist of the movie *The Whale* is a person who has fallen into the abyss of sadness and while he eats to find comfort all that he does is numb the emotion, and the pain and inadvertently harm himself in the long run, this inability to contemplate and face the reality of the demise of a loved one has incapacitated the protagonist ability to process in the society thus he chooses to live in solitude.

Sadness alone cannot pave a person’s path to self-destruction there exists an intricate web of emotions that connect and progress into actions. Here, in the movie along with sadness, there is the more potent emotion of hopelessness, the concept of hopelessness is that it renders people from committing to a task as they may find it futile since the ultimate result is that their actions do not matter and inevitably, they are to meet with their end. Based on the movie the hopelessness portrayed by the protagonist is that of a lover, the untimely demise of his partner prevented him from proceeding with his life and thus the protagonist paves an unhealthy lifestyle, to find comfort from the pain he feels and also to exit the stage of life.

In a particular scene of the movie, the protagonist is seen to be overwhelmed by the fact that he is an absentee parent and his daughter who came to see him reminds him of this and also insinuates the fact that he was only concerned about his happiness for which he was willing to leave his daughter and his family. In the consequent scene, the viewers can see a broken man trying all he can to go after his daughter, alas his size doesn’t allow him to move, this overwhelming feeling of inability breaks the man and one can see how the man is at the verge of breaking down, he goes around the house in a frenzy stuffing all edible items this action indicates the emotional frustration faced by the protagonist is portrayed in this scene.

Looking at this behavior of the protagonist from a different perspective one can deduce that the protagonist is an example of gluttony, one of the seven sins, of The Bible. Alas, this movie is not a simple tale of a man's eating habits rather it is an intricate tale of human emotions and how the viewers perceive the emotions of the characters; it is possible to assume that through this movie one can achieve the precipice of catharsis, which in turn enable the viewers to purge their emotions in safety and its entirety.

### **Culinary Narratives**

Tamil cinema has a distinctive way of incorporating food into its storytelling. Food is not just a prop; it becomes a character, a cultural symbol, and a means of expression. Filmmakers skilfully use the preparation and sharing of meals to signify familial bonds, relationships, and emotions.

In movies like *KaakaMuttai*, the narrative revolves around the aspirations of two young boys from a lower-income background, where the struggle for a pizza becomes a metaphor for their dreams and aspirations. This subtle integration of food into the storyline adds depth and relatability to the characters.

Tamil cinema is celebrated for its portrayal of diverse regional cuisines and traditions. Whether it's the grandeur of a Chettinad feast or the simplicity of a village meal, filmmakers meticulously capture the essence of Tamil Nadu's culinary diversity.

Movies like *EngaVeetuPillai* and *SamsaramAdhuMinsaram* showcase the importance of traditional family meals, reflecting the cultural significance of coming together over food. This narrative technique not only provides a sensory experience for the audience but also acts as a bridge connecting them with the cultural roots depicted on screen.

Beyond food, Tamil cinema uses lifestyle elements as a mirror reflecting the societal norms and values of the time. From the attire characters choose to the festivals they celebrate; every detail contributes to the storytelling. In films like *Mouna Ragam*, the choice of modern urban lifestyles versus traditional values is explored through the protagonist's journey. This nuanced portrayal of lifestyle choices adds layers to the narrative, making it relatable to a diverse audience while preserving the authenticity of Tamil culture.

### **Changing Trends and Global Influences**

As Tamil cinema evolves, it reflects changing trends in food and lifestyle. Urbanization, globalization, and the impact of technology are seamlessly integrated into narratives, depicting a contemporary and dynamic society.

Movies like *Chekka Chivantha Vaanam* explore the intersection of crime and corporate culture, subtly incorporating modern lifestyles and global influences. This not only keeps the storytelling relevant but also positions Tamil cinema on the global stage, showcasing its adaptability and resonance with a diverse audience.

## Conclusion

The Indian conception of food is parcelled with the picturization of a woman in a kitchen or something similar where the women section of the population works along with food. Based on the above-mentioned works one can perceive how this is evident even in the world of media. Each Tamil movie that has been mentioned above has portrayed strong-willed women who have empowered those around them through their words and caressed those around them with food made out of not only material ingredients but also their love for them. Tamil cinema's narrating technique through food and lifestyle is a testament to its ability to transcend traditional storytelling boundaries. By infusing narratives with the rich tapestry of culinary experiences and cultural nuances, filmmakers create a sensory journey that resonates with audiences, both locally and globally. Through the lens of food and lifestyle, Tamil cinema continues to capture the essence of Tamil culture, making it a unique and cherished cinematic experience.

Food being a universal concept its preceding attributes such as human emotions is also a universal concept and the movie *The whale* portrays a part of these emotions using food as a medium to convey to the audience worldwide the grimmer aspect of food and human emotions and how one's life is heavily influenced by what one eats. While the Indian cinema, or to be specific the Tamil movie industry envisions portraying the cultural aspect as well as the positivity through their visuals of food the above-mentioned movie aims to enrich the human mind with a more realistic situation that takes place in numerous societies.

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## **Analysis of the Role of the Female Lead in the Film Gatta Kusthi**

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### **Introduction**

*Gatta Kusthi* (2022) serves as a poignant exploration of societal expectations and the profound impact on individual lives, particularly that of Keerthi, the lead female character. According to Mary Woolstone Craft (First wave of feminism), women had little choice other than to fit into the societal framework. Otherwise, they would be termed as *a freaks, a monster or a witch*. The film masterfully delves into the complexities of navigating family and societal pressures, painting a vivid picture of the challenges faced by women in conforming to traditional roles.

Keerthi, the journey unfolds against the backdrop of Veera, who grew up under a male upbringing. Ultimately, it stands as a compelling narrative that challenges societal norms and supports the cause of women's autonomy and equality.

### **Family Pressure**

Keerthi experiences significant family pressure to get married. Raised in a society that adheres to traditional norms, Keerthi encounters expectations that conflict with her aspirations. Her family, particularly her father and uncle, play a pivotal role in pressuring her to marry. Despite her interest in wrestling, familial expectations prioritize marriage. Keerthi's father, facing health concerns, becomes adamant about her settling down. The urgency to find a suitable match intensifies, leading to her uncle's intervention in arranging her marriage with Veera.

### **Behavioural Expectations**

Veera, influenced by a male chauvinistic upbringing, has specific and traditional expectations regarding marriage. His expectations include seeking a bride who is less educated than him, has long hair is silent and obedient, and does not plan to pursue a career. These expectations reflect traditional gender roles and societal norms prevalent in his upbringing.

Veera's desire for a compliant and submissive partner is evident when he unexpectedly ends up marrying Keerthi, who defies many of his set conditions. The clash between Veera's expectations and Keerthi's individuality becomes a central theme in the narrative.

The film portrays Veera's struggle to reconcile his rigid marriage expectations with the evolving dynamics of his relationship with Keerthi.

## **Role of Keerthi**

Keerthi serves as the protagonist and the primary focus of the film, driving the storyline forward with her challenges, experiences, and choices. The character of Keerthi faces significant conflict within her family, particularly concerning the pressure to conform to traditional expectations, get married, and prioritize family over her wrestling career. He convinces her to lie about herself and pretend to adjust to Veera's type. Hence, she has to wear hair extensions and control her anger. She accepts Veera's marriage proposal only because he refuses dowry. To adhere to Veera's expectations and societal norms, Keerthi conceals her true identity and compromises her authentic self, leading to internal conflict and emotional struggles.

Keerthi's identity as a wrestler forms a crucial aspect of her character. Her passion for wrestling is central to the plot, creating tension as she navigates societal expectations and her aspirations. Her journey becomes a powerful exploration of breaking free from these expectations and pursuing her career. Keerthi's character becomes a symbol of empowerment as she challenges gender norms and expectations. Her resilience and determination inspire a shift in societal perspectives on women's roles.

## **Role of Other Women in the Film**

The role of Keerthi's mother is portrayed as a woman who merely agrees with her elders and husband. Despite societal conflicts, Keerthi's mother may find herself torn between adhering to traditional norms and supporting Keerthi's individuality. The grandmother's role may symbolize traditional values and generational differences. Her views on marriage and societal norms may add complexity to Keerthi's struggle, highlighting the clash between different generations.

The film doesn't limit its exploration to Keerthi alone; it extends to Veera's aunt, who, too, finds herself confined by certain behavioral expectations dictated by her husband. Her character represents a woman who is forced by cultural aspects to conform to societal expectations, besides being an educated woman. Her character might serve as a reflection of the challenges women face in conforming to predefined roles.

## **Individuality**

Keerthi's character acts as an agent of change, prompting a transformation in Veera's mindset and challenging traditional beliefs. Her actions contribute to the film's broader message of embracing individuality and gender equality.

The climax of the film marks Keerthi's triumphant return to wrestling. This signifies not only her victory but also serves as a powerful statement against societal restrictions on women. The climax of the film becomes a turning point, marked by Veera's realization and Keerthi's triumphant return to wrestling. This pivotal moment serves as the crux of the film's powerful message, shedding light on the importance of supporting and understanding women. The film argues that allowing women to be themselves, unburdened by societal expectations, is the key to easing their lives in a world burdened by rigid norms.

### **Summation**

The storyline challenges and critiques traditional gender norms, showcasing the impact of societal expectations on individuals' personal lives and relationships. Veera's character arc reflects a transformative journey as he grapples with his deeply ingrained beliefs and confronts the disparity between his expectations and the reality of Keerthi's identity. In essence, *Gatta Kusthi* artfully illustrates the repercussions of imposing inflexible expectations on women. It persuades society to break free from these constraints and embrace the individuality of women. Through Keerthi's journey, *“the film advocates for a shift, urging viewers to reconsider traditional gender roles and foster an environment that values and nurtures women's aspirations”*.

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#### **Dr G Radha**

Dr. G. Radha embodies the pinnacle of academic excellence, wielding over two decades of teaching experience and three and a half years of industry immersion in Visual Communication and Electronic Media. As the esteemed Head of the Department at PSG College of Arts and Science, she cultivates an environment of innovation and scholarly pursuit. Dr. Radha's expertise spans a myriad of domains including Journalism, Media Research, New Media, Advertising, and Public Relations, evident through her extensive publications in prestigious national and international journals and her illuminating presentations at renowned seminars and conferences worldwide. In her multifaceted roles as Conference Convener, Seminar Coordinator, Event Coordinator, and Editor-in-Chief, she showcases exceptional organizational acumen and an unwavering dedication to fostering intellectual discourse. Her membership in various academic boards underscores her profound influence in shaping the trajectory of educational discourse. Dr. Radha's profound knowledge, extensive experience, and resolute commitment to academic excellence greatly inspire both peers and students alike, solidifying her as a highly respected luminary in the fields of Visual Communication and Electronic Media.



#### **Dr P Panbu Selvan**

Dr. P. Panbu Selvan, Assistant Professor Department of Visual Communication and Electronic Media at PSG College of Arts and Science, Coimbatore, bridges the realms of Tamil cinema and academia with remarkable finesse. With a decade-long immersion in the Tamil Film Industry, his journey encompasses diverse roles, from assistant directorships in acclaimed Tamil films like to co-directorial ventures in promotional and corporate films. His industry experience underscores his nuanced understanding of cinematic storytelling, honed through collaborations with renowned directors and substantial contributions to promotional and corporate film projects. Transitioning seamlessly from the glitz of the film industry to the corridors of academia, his scholarly pursuits delve deep into the socio-cultural landscape of Tamil cinema. His research endeavors are marked by a keen focus on gender representation, societal narratives, and the transformative potential of cinematic storytelling. Notably, he has spearheaded ICSSR-funded project shedding light on indigenous communities showcasing his commitment to scholarly inquiry and societal engagement. His academic footprint extends beyond research publications, encompassing active participation in conferences, workshops, and faculty development programs. His scholarly contributions, spanning from thought-provoking articles in esteemed journals to insightful paper presentations at prestigious conferences, underscore his status as a thought leader in the intersection of cinema, culture, and society. Through his multifaceted endeavors, Dr. P. Panbu Selvan emerges as a transformative figure, weaving together the realms of industry expertise and academic inquiry to illuminate new horizons in Tamil cinema and scholarly discourse.

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