

An analysis of the male lead roles in the women-centric Tamil films

M.Lakshmipriya ¹, Dr K Shanthichitra ², Dr R.Rajesh ³

¹Research scholar

*Department of visual communication,
College of Science and Humanities
SRM Institute of Science and Technology
Kattankulathur, Chennai*

²Head & Professor,

*Department of English,
College of Science and Humanities,
SRM Institute of Science and Technology
Kattankulathur, Chennai*

³Head & Associate Professor,

*Department of Visual communication,
College of Science and Humanities,
SRM Institute of Science and Technology
Kattankulathur, Chennai*

ABSTRACT

Everybody's life is significantly impacted by movies. Despite the language, it has both favourable and unfavourable effects on the audience. People are therefore greatly influenced by the material they see in movies. Bollywood is regarded as India's capital in the film business, while Tamil Nadu's capital is Kollywood. Since previous times, the majority of people have a stronger connection to regional language films than to other language films. Since they concentrate on the content, all film companies and their audiences today welcome even dubbed versions or original versions of films in other languages. The purpose of the study is to examine and comprehend how men have been portrayed throughout the course of the last five years in Tamil cinema's women-centric films. In former times, masculine characters in their movies would repress the female ones. The female characters in male main roles will be the backbone of the plot. Women-centric films, which eventually came to be recognised as a specific cinema genre, were first produced by filmmakers during this period of transformation. Men are established as deuteragonists in the movie, while women first take the lead and become the protagonist. Are males actually prioritised? What connections do they have to the movie's female leads?

Keywords: *Influence, Characterisations, Suppressed, Deuteragonists, Impact.*

INTRODUCTION:

According to nature, humans are largely regarded as a species of two, with one being male and the other female. Compared to women, men play a more prominent role. Some male community members are very supportive of treating women equally. While some people are never seen as being human. Despite the language, the majority of the movie demonstrates that men must be heroes and violent, while women must be heroines and sensible people. The distinction between a mother, daughter, and wife is frequently depicted in movies. This demonstrates how women's courage is being repressed in all circumstances. Additionally, it perpetuates an ancient urban legend that all movies need heroes who are men in order to be financially successful. The idea that there should only be one hero in a movie, and that hero should be a man, has also been ingrained in the minds of viewers. Even though it was challenging to overcome the stereotype in the movie, a few modifications occurred and spread throughout society, which affected viewer perceptions. Men used to play the main lead roles in movies and women would play supporting roles; now, the roles have reversed, with men playing supporting roles and women taking the lead roles. In the future, movies will include either two heroines or two heroes. They also began to categorise women based only on their filmic attire. In the movie, women began to take the place of males as heroes. In certain movies, men play supportive roles, while in others, men play no part at all.

OBJECTIVES:

- To analyse the characterisation of the male leads in women-centric films of Tamil cinema.
- To examine the importance given to male leads in women-centric films.
- To identify the representation pattern of male leads in women-centric films of the last 5 years.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

In recent days, many of the Tamil films, have got good plot and screenplay, which is appreciable. But, what they missed out much was a good characterisation for the female leads. Parallely, women-centric films have started increasing in the Tamil film industry. In an earlier era like, 60's and 70's Tamil film also had strong women-centric films which later got reduced and now started increasing. Several researchers have analysed this change and also examined the adaptations of the same among the audience.

According to Lagamba, J. L(2012), in most of the films, the women's weaknesses force their identity changes throughout the films. In spite of the fear and desire to do something, woman change their identities.

And according to Agarwal(2014), over a few decades, Indian cinema has witnessed a lot of significant transformation of woman characters portrayed in films. This fast-changing role of women in Indian cinema has influenced the patriarchal society of India.

And Murphy, J. N(2015)examined the significance of the prevalent themes on current attitudes toward women and how they may shape the future of gender representations and equality.

According to Amrutha(2018), in almost all female-oriented movies, women tries to protect themselves from the struggle but men usually don't even support them. Because of that men are considered antagonists in female-oriented movies. It also becomes a stereotype in filmmaking.

Talukdar, H(2018) analysed the portrayal of male role characters generates underlying meaning in culture-specific context.

According to Kusuma. K(2018), there are very few female actors who could achieve the status of female lead roles to the stardom on pairing with male actors.

Banerjee, S(2021) says that Tamil films have been primarily male-dominated and had themes of hyper-masculinity in earlier days. And now it has got shifted to a more female-oriented approach.

And according to Pichanot, P. (2021), it is important to illustrate the role of the state in the creation of gender roles. Because, in most of the films, the hero of the film will be portrayed as active whereas, heroines will be passive.

Among these researches, male dominance and female suppression in films was discussed more. When we focus on women-centric films, how are male portrayed will be the key analysis of this research paper.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

The data for this research was collected using content analysis of 5 women-centric Tamil movies of the last 5 consecutive years i.e from 2017 to 2021. Among all the women-centric films, the below mentioned list of films was selected randomly.

1. Aramm (2017)
2. Kaatrin mozhi (2018)
3. Raatchasi (2019)
4. Penguin (2020)
5. Netrikaan (2021)

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION:

1. **Name of the Film:** Aramm (2017)

Female lead: Nayanthara

Male lead: Nil

Supporting character: Kitty

Male role's relation to female lead: Higher official

Plot: A district collector struggles to rescue a child who got stuck in a borewell. During the process, she faces several hindrances and also will be enquired by her higher officials for risking the lives of the children. After which she resigns and decides to help the needy by being a common person.

Interpretation:

The story revolves around the district collector, who is confronted with challenges to rescue a child who got stuck in a bore well. No male lead is portrayed, instead, a supporting character is shown as her higher professional who is not ready to give her approval as she has risked the lives of many. No much screen time was even given to the supporting role in the film.

2. **Name of the Film:** Kaatrin mozhi (2018)

Female lead: Jyothika

Male lead: Nil

Supporting character: Vidharth

Male role's relation to female lead: Husband

Plot: An ambitious housewife becomes a radio jockey for a night show. Since she was made fun of her poor education by her own sisters, she keep on tries to achieve something which ended in her being RJ. It makes everyone angry in her home including her husband for choosing such a night show. After few issues, how she manages both personal and professional life was the end of the story.

Interpretation:

The story focuses on a housewife who wishes to achieve something and be a successful person. Though her husband is shown as a lovable person, he was also not wishing to send her to such a job. Neither her sisters nor her husband allows her to continue her job because of the issues at home. At the end, she continues the same job which she first thought she will resign it for her family. No equal treatment was given to male and female roles in their characterizations.

3. **Name of the Film:** Raatchasi (2019)

Female lead: Jyothika

Male lead: Nil

Supporting character: Hareesh Peradi

Male role's relation to female lead: Antagonist

Plot: A Lieutenant colonel becomes a headmistress and converts a poorly running government school into one of the best schools in the state. During the process, she gains new friends and enemies. One strong character among which is the antagonist who is not willing to have the change and fighting against the female lead.

Interpretation:

The story focuses only on the development made by the female lead. So, no male lead roles were shown. At one point, to show or connect the sudden arrival of female lead, her lover character was used for reference. Such a character is not even shown in the entire movie as a person, he was referred only in dialogues. And the antagonist was shown as a person who was bothering the female lead throughout the film by not making her to develop the school peacefully.

4. **Name of the Film:** Penguin (2020)

Female lead: Keerthy Suresh

Male lead: Nil

Supporting character: Madhampatty Rangaraj / Linga

Male role's relation to female lead: Husband

Plot: A pregnant woman was worried about her child who was missing years ago. She was traumatized about the unsolved kidnapping of her child, later solves the mystery on her own.

Interpretation:

The story focuses on the pain and struggles suffered by the female lead. A pregnant woman remembers her child who went missing years ago. After the child's missing, her husband

started becoming toxic by saying she was the reason for the loss and separated ways from her. Later after years, a male character was shown who accepted her as she is and started living happily with her. No strong characterization or importance was given to both these male roles. They are just part of the screenplay.

5. **Name of the Film:** Netrikaan (2021)

Female lead: Nayanthara

Male lead: Nil

Supporting character: Ajmal Ameer

Male role's relation to female lead: Antagonist

Plot: An ex-CBI agent who has got the disability after losing her eyesight in a road accident falls prey to a sexual predator in co-incidence who actually kidnaps and violates young women. Later after many struggles, she brings the abuser to justice but he escapes and tries to kill her which leads to she killing him in the end.

Interpretation:

The story focuses on an ex-CBI agent who gets to notice the connection between girls missing case and the hit and run case where she finds out about the sexual predator after several struggles. The male character in this film is shown as an antagonist who is also an abuser and a predator. He is portrayed as a negative character with several aggressive behaviour.

FINDINGS:

Among several movies getting released in the women-centric genre every year, one film from each year of the last 5 years was selected for this analysis. One common aspect and pattern followed in all the selected movies is, they don't have male lead roles. And if a male lead or a male role is shown in the film, they will be either a supporting character or an antagonist. Male roles are shown negatively such as abuser or someone who pulls back the female lead from achieving something. They won't be supportive to the female roles, they will be against them in every aspect. And especially, the male roles will not be a popular actor who has got the same weightage as of the female leads of the particular film. Some filmmakers try to give a happy ending by making the male role realize their mistake and support female roles. Since this trend is accepted and adapted by the audience, filmmakers are following the same pattern. Even the female leads are the same in many of the women-centric films which have got a strong message. According to the need in the plot, only the characterization and relationship keep changing in the films for both male and female characters.

CONCLUSION:

Majority of the people in our society expect gender equality, especially women. They want themselves to be treated equally to men. May it be in society or may it be in movies, female wants equal status. There are movies in which female leads are considered only as supporting characters and no much importance or screen time is given to them in the screenplay. It was questioned and opposed much by some of the people from the female community and also by some of the researchers. When it comes to women-centric movies, it has become a trend in the film industry of all regional languages. Though this particular genre was introduced long back,

in recent times, especially in Tamil film industry, there is a rise in the count of women-centric films getting released. Since it is women-centric films, only women lead role is given much importance, no much importance is given to male leads. Either there will be no male leads or they will be only supporting characters who are not familiar or popular in the film industry. The plot and the treatment of the screenplay can focus on women as a centre point, but why not a popular actor same as the popularity of female actors in those movies. Almost many of the films, follow this same pattern in choosing the cast for the male leads in women-centric movies. Gender equality in films also leads to the characterization of male and female roles and also their popularity in the industry. Such plots might also be appreciated among the audience when it comes to trend.

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