

Examining the portrayal of transgender people in Tamil movies in comparison to reality

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ABSTRACT:

The aim of the research paper is to analyse how transgender people cope both in real life and on screen. The way transgender people are portrayed in movies affects both the public and the transgender community significantly. The way they live their lives, in reality, differs from how they are represented in films. Although transgender people have been depicted in movies since the beginning, the way that they are portrayed is incorrect, because not all transgender people are alike, despite what is depicted in the films. People are impacted by how their parts are written in movies and act accordingly. In recent years, some films have accurately portrayed them in a positive light, while others have done so in a negative light. The analysis of successful transgender people in real life and films that represent them negatively is the main emphasis of this study. In most cases, real-life incidents that are portrayed in movies will be slightly exaggerated. Few movies depict transgender people in the same way that they are in contemporary society. What are the roles they perform in society? How dissimilarly are they presented in movies? So, both the fact and the portrayal will be examined.

Keywords: *Portrayal, impact, transgender, society and reality.*

INTRODUCTION:

Cinema is considered a bridge to convey or inform something to a large group of audience. Knowing this filmmakers, construct concepts either the same way or in a manipulative manner. Some films are referred to real-life incidents and are showcased the same way. But when it comes to the concept of transgender i.e the third gender in the community, it is very much more manipulative than real-life incidents. A future without biological sex, gender, or binary identities of hetero, homo, bi, or transsexuality is a future in which there is no sexual difference.^[1] Real-life educators have a duty to teach queerness that subverts stereotypes and complicates the sex/gender system because the media is such an influential educator and it frequently educates in ways that reinforce unhealthy or destructive depictions.^[2] Despite increasing awareness of this representation, a lack of research persists on the perspectives of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) youth regarding depictions of transgender people in contemporary media.^[3] Despite presently being legally recognized as the third gender, the group nonetheless faces widespread rejection and is frequently the target of discrimination and hatred.^[4] Transgender people's chances of finding employment have been ruined by negative portrayals of them.^[5] In order to better understand how oppressed groups are portrayed in various texts and how a body of text might convey certain notions about a marginalized group, this research looks at transgender portrayals in film.^[6] The fact that no actual trans person played any of the roles in any of the previously released films presents a significant additional issue.^[7] Popular movies serve the demands of a big audience, hence minorities are frequently underrepresented or occasionally misrepresented as a result.^[8] The isolation of this community is also reflected in the way transgender characters are represented in Indian entertainment media.^[9] Real life and movies are not the same. Transgender people, however, have a higher fall.^[10] In spite of the proper treatment, they are pushed in a bad light. The way society is constructed depends entirely on the visualization that they see in media. Among all media fields, cinema has got the power directly to cultivate and even induce the minds of the audience to react and behave. Hence, through this study, the reel life and reel life of the transgender community will be analyzed.

OBJECTIVE OF THE RESEARCH:

- To examine the representation of transgender characters in Tamil cinema.
- To study the reality and existence of the transgender community in Tamil Nadu.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

According to Tamilselvi Natarajan, images are making a significant impact on the audience about transgender. She has stated it in her paper “Voicing the Voiceless: Representation of the Excluded Transgender Community in Tamil Cinema”. Arulchevan and Shanmughavel during 2016 they have explained the experience of exclusion of male to female Transgender Communities in Tamil films. In 2019, Mangayarkarasi in her research article, “Portrayal of Transgender people in Tamil cinema” discussed the different characterizations which are showcased in films. According to Hausman and Bernice L; virtual sex and actual gender are other when we discuss the transgender community in common. And according to Siebler and Kay; Transqueer Representations and the way we are educated are not up to reality,

rather we are getting influenced by the construction created. Miller during 2018, part of their research paper, discussed about cross-dressing cinema through which an analysis of transgender representation in film was also done. A research paper called “Transgender in India: a semiotic and reception analysis of Bollywood movies” by Ruchi Ravi shewade showcased the explicit depiction of transgender roles in films. Mcinroy, L. B., & Craig, S. L. discussed transgender representation in offline and online media which helps us in knowing the reality and their connection with media. In 2015, Nanditha Ravindar discussed the portrayal of Transgender People in Tamil Cinema and why it Matters through which she explained that filmmakers should take responsibility properly and cultivate the concept the same way.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

In this paper, the data was collected using content analysis of 2 Tamil films and 2 achievers from the transgender community in Tamil Nadu. From the methodology, we can find out how films portray transgender people in a bad light and how it spoiled their chances for them to survive in this society same as other genders. Whereas we will also discuss the achievers who came out of the struggles and achieved.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION:

Reel Life:

1. **Name of the Film:** Appu(2000)

Role: Villain

Interpretation:

It was actually the first Tamil film that showcased the transgender role as the antagonist throughout the film. Compared to the other characters their screen time is lesser, still this movie particularly created fear in the minds of the Tamil audience. The transgender role was shown as a terrific character who is indulged in illegal activities such as prostitution and violence. It has created a huge negative impact on the Tamil audience.

2. **Name of the Film:** Vettaiyadu Vilayadu(2006)

Role: Sex Worker

Interpretation:

The portrayal of transgender was as a rapist and homosexuals. A stereotyped character of a sex worker and a villain was assigned to the actors, which has actually misinterpreted the LGBT community.

Both films showed transgender as an object of fear or shame, which strongly cultivated the minds of the Tamil cinema audience. These two movies were on the top list which showcased transgenders and left them in a bad light.

Real Life:

Sathyasri Sharmila (Lawyer):

She became the country's first transgender lawyer. She led the way by pursuing law to battle against injustice, shattering the stereotyped thinking that was previously prevalent. She waited

more than ten years before she had the courage to declare herself an attorney, and she did so only to support her community in standing up to the injustices they have been subjected to for years. Over the years, she has served as a transgender activist.

Prithika Yashini (Police officer):

She was India's first transgender police officer. She is currently employed as a sub-inspector in a district in Tamil Nadu, but her battle to become an officer was difficult because her application was turned down due to her gender. She contested the rejection, nevertheless, and engaged in a legal conflict before the Madras High Court. She subsequently passed the necessary tests and received the position to which she was legally entitled. She had to flee her home because she was sick of her parents' attempts to "make things right" through astrological, medical, and religious means.

These two achievers are shortlisted among the other achievers from Tamil Nadu who have paved the way for their fellow community people. In spite of the struggles faced by society and by their own families, they worked hard and reach higher levels and started shining equally.

SUMMARY:

Transgender people have long been shown in Indian cinema, particularly Tamil cinema, as objects of pleasure. They were portrayed more as a sex worker or as someone with nasty attitudes. The audience's thoughts were similarly developed by these portrayals in Tamil movies. Because not all people are created equal, when someone tries to rob something, we either curse them or, to a lesser extent, their family, but not the entire human race. Similar to this, there can be a gang of people that carry out such heinous deeds in order to survive. But that does not imply that everyone in their community acts in the same way. There are people who have excelled in practically every sector and continue to put in a lot of effort in their local area. They hold several prominent roles in the government and the media. Even though success in all areas is difficult, especially in our state, they are displaying their abilities with a strong sense of resolve and moving forward. Slowly, people have come to accept them as they are. Perhaps a smaller percentage of the population has already embraced them and is helping them.

LIMITATION:

- The films chosen for the analysis are restricted only to Tamil cinema.
- The shortlisted transgender community people are only from Tamil Nadu.

CONCLUSION:

Films and other forms of mass media have the capacity to influence enormous numbers of people and even help them form new theories in their minds. With time, filmmakers have become more aware of the significance of the individuals they are presenting and have begun portraying transgender people favourably. In some movies, real-life allusions are also employed to highlight a role, although briefly. The Tamil cinema business is changing, which is encouraging to observe and which the audience is slowly embracing. Although the initial construction that took place in the audience's minds was not good, it needs to be rebuilt using

the same platform to demonstrate that they are no longer the same. They are truly succeeding and making progress, which can be demonstrated and planted in the minds of viewers who have negative attitudes toward their community and are unwilling to embrace their development. Even though the Tamil cinema business is gradually transforming, society's perception of the community must also drastically change.

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