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A STUDY ON GENDER REPESENTATION IN VISUAL MEDIA – DECODING STEROTYPES AND INCLUSIVITY IN CINEMAS

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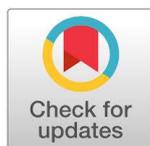Department of Visual Communication
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Abstract: Cinema is playing vital role in the human life and it is reflection of the society. Film and its innovations sometimes has to catch up to society but sometimes it leads society too. Movies are stories, movies are people who come out with ideas about something they want to say, something they want to tell someone. Movies are a form of communication and that communication, those stories, come from societies- not just where society is presently and what it's doing now- but where society has been. It's been that way for as long as movies have been around. Movies are different things to different people, that's what is so incredible about them. Especially, Indian Industry are made by based on our everyday life and family activities of our culture. In that context, most of the Tamil, Telugu movies have been showing us gender representation in visual media – Decoding Stereotypes and inclusivity

Keywords: Media Stereotypes, Male gaze Inclusive Representation intersectionality, Toxic Masculinity, Female Media Studies.

INTRODUCTION:

The cinema is crucial entertainment tool for people. In India, Film industry is one of the biggest industry to making a lot of films per annum. Cinema in general is something that can pull everyone together. Today, audiences have started watching films in languages other than Tamil. The time for Pan India will never come. Even if we watch films in other languages in their own language, the gender representation, stereotypes, and insults that are prevalent in cinema are still so widespread that people are unaware of them today. It is being changed and implemented, and we are following it out of oblivion in our lives. How is it that his revelation has greatly influenced the next generation of directors (short film directors?). Unknowingly, today's leading directors have also followed his example in his film. Impact on Audiences: Research investigates how exposure to these representations influences public perception, promotes equality or inequality, and can lead to negative effects like body dissatisfaction, anxiety, and self-esteem issues. he female gender is used as a subject in a movie with big heroes. It is shown in ghost stories, including those where white is superior and black is inferior. This happens even in advertising films. It is used in the second person in cases such as the protagonist, the white person, the protagonist's friend, etc. Even in commercials, including perfume shirts and underwear, men are portrayed as having a fair complexion. Even if you are dark-skinned, you can turn white by using this soap today's depiction. It still moves the viewer's knowledge backwards. The number of people using the site to believe this is also high, even though they are Educated.

REGARDING THE STUDY:

Film holds significant importance in the state of Tamilnadu, Telangana & Andhra Pradesh. Through films, people acquire diverse knowledge. As people know cinema stand as a prominent entertainment tool. Hence, this research aims to analyse how Tamil and Telugu cinemas are portrayal on gender representation in visual media – Decoding Stereotypes and inclusivity.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND FILM SELECTION:

This study employs content analysis as its research methodology. content analysis is a method striving for an objective, precise, and comprehensive description of what is communicated on a specific subject in a particular context and time The selection of films for analysis spans the years 2015 to 2025. Films chosen for this research include **Pushpa 2021 & 2024, Bigil 2019, Arjun Reddy 2017, Velaikaran 2017, Rx100 2018.**

LITERATURE REVIEW

Cinema has long been recognized as a powerful mass communication vehicle that shapes social values, beliefs, and cultural norms as well as reflecting society. Movies develop and spread gender, power, and identity meanings, according to gender, media, and sociology scholars (Hall, 1997). Film's enormous audience reach and emotional connection with viewers across linguistic, geographical, and social divisions make it important in Indian society. Cinema Reflects Culture and Society: Early film theorists considered cinema as a representation of social reality; later scholars focused on how it promotes ideology. Mulvey (1975) claims that patriarchal rules frequently structure the visual pleasure that mainstream film exploits to position women as objects of the masculine gaze. Indian cinema, particularly popular commercial cinema, has taken from daily life, family relationships, and cultural traditions, even if it frequently reinforces gender hierarchies (Dwyer, 2006). Indian cinema studies show that spectacle and repetition normalize dominant beliefs rather than just reporting social actions (Chakravarty, 1993). Tamil and Telugu movies, which are star-driven, have promoted masculine dominance and gender stereotypes.

Stereotyping and Gender Representation in Indian Film: One of the key concerns of feminist media studies has been gender representation. According to research, women in popular Indian films are usually portrayed in constrictive clichés including the subservient daughter, the selfless mother, the love interest, or the ethical defender of tradition (Gokulsing & Dissanayake, 2013). These images foster the idea that women exist only in relation to male protagonists and reduce female agency. Even in movies that pretend to encourage social change or women's empowerment, female protagonists are frequently subordinated to male heroes, according to a number of studies on South Indian film (Virdi, 2003). The storyline of Tamil and Telugu movies typically revolves on the male hero's journey, with women playing more as love interests, emotional motivators, or aesthetic attractions than as stand-alone characters. In recent years, the idea of toxic masculinity has garnered more and more scholarly attention. The manner that films like Arjun Reddy (2017) and Rx100 (2018) depict violent masculinity, emotional dominance, and entitlement in romantic partnerships has received criticism. Although these films were acclaimed for their authenticity, some contend that by depicting them as manifestations of passion or personal liberty, they normalize masculine aggressiveness and emotional abuse (Banaji, 2018).

The Objectification and Male Gaze : When examining Indian cinema, Laura Mulvey's theory of the male gaze is still extremely pertinent. Women are commonly positioned as

objects of spectacle designed for male enjoyment through visual framing, song sequences, wardrobe design, and camera movement. According to studies on romantic songs and item counts in Tamil and Telugu movies, women's bodies are constantly sexualized and broken, which contributes to reinforce patriarchal power systems (Dutta, 2016). Objectification is especially obvious in movies with large male stars, because the main aim of the female characters is to affirm the hero's masculinity. Even in current film, this tendency remains in spite of increased discourses about diversity and gender sensitivity.

Colorism, Visual Media, and Fairness Ideology: In Indian visual culture, colorism is still a serious problem. Scholars claim that whilst dark complexion is commonly associated with inferiority or humorous relief, light skin is promoted in Indian cinema and advertising as being connected with beauty, success, and moral superiority (Parameswaran & Cardoza, 2009). These depictions have their roots in caste-based institutions and colonial histories, which continue have an impact on visual storytelling today. Fairness-centric themes are not simply present in movies, according to studies; they are also aggressively promoted in commercials for soaps, scents, garments, and underwear. These advertising propagate discriminatory beauty standards by stating that lighter skin might lead to social mobility and desirability (Glenn, 2008). Color-based symbolism is further reinforced in the horror and fantasy genres, where darkness is related to evil or terror and whiteness to purity or power. Often without the audience's understanding, these visual metaphors slowly encourage people to internalize race hierarchy.


Impact on the Audience and Psychological Repercussions: Research on media effects emphasizes how profoundly audience opinions and self-perception are impacted by

continuous exposure to stereotyped images. According to cultivation theory, viewers' views of social reality are altered by extended exposure to media content (Gerbner et al., 2002). Research reveals that, especially among young viewers, excessive beauty standards and gender stereotypes in movies lead to anxiety, low self-esteem, body dissatisfaction, and the internalization of unequal gender norms. Crucially, studies demonstrate that a person's level of education does not always shield them from the influence of the media. When regressive images become widespread in popular culture, even viewers with a high level of education may unknowingly adopt them (Gill, 2007).

Impact on Up-and-Coming Visual Culture and Filmmakers: Current research also focuses at how seasoned filmmakers impact future filmmakers, notably independent and short film makers. Short films and internet material typically copy the visual aesthetics, narratives, and character clichés made popular by mainstream cinema, sometimes without critical critique. Because of this, stereotyped gender depictions remain on many platforms, reinforcing dominant beliefs in the name of originality or realism.
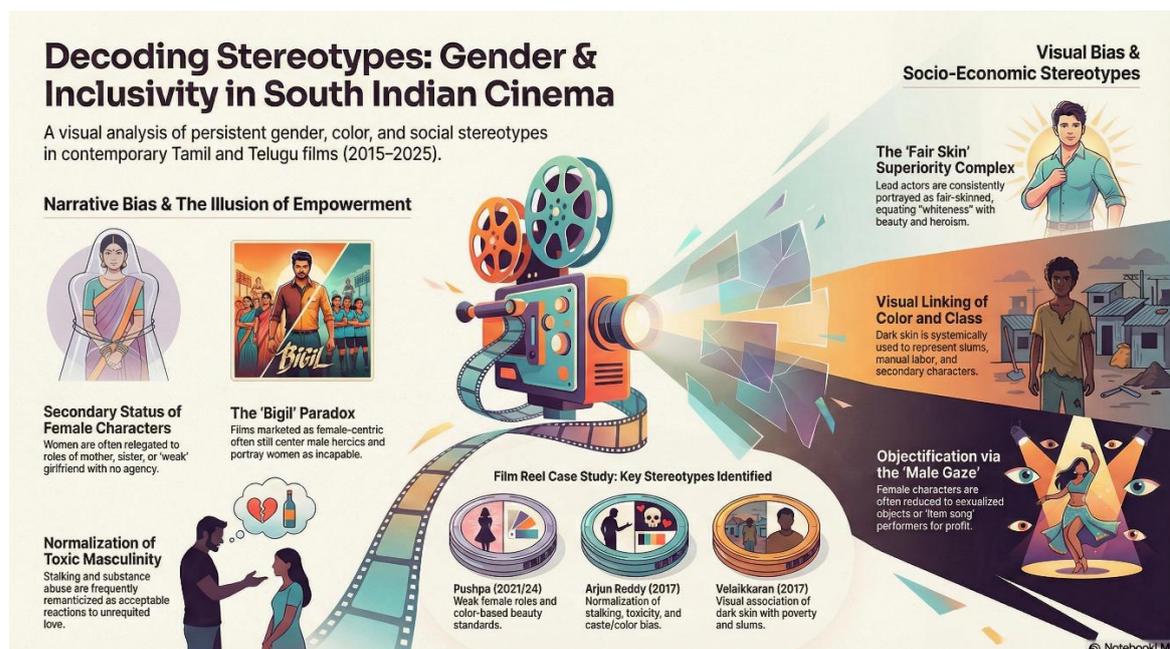
Even though gender representation in Indian cinema has been the topic of multiple studies, comparative, region-specific research of Tamil and Telugu films released after 2015 is still absent. Furthermore, scarcely much study blends audience influence, masculinity, gender, and colorism into a coherent analytical framework. By employing content analysis to expose stereotypes and promote inclusivity in a select chosen Tamil and Telugu films released between 2015 and 2025, this study intends to close this gap.

Pushpa 1& 2

The protagonist, Allu Arjun (Pushparaj), is a smuggler of red wood. While traveling through the forests, he finds red wood. He takes it to the syndicate, defying the police officers who came to stop it. There, he assumes a rich avatar. After some time, another police officer, Shikhawat Singh (Fahad Faasil), arrives. He is portrayed as a psychotic character, opposing him and the CM, and is rising in the red light district. The kidnapper is portrayed as a hero and a smart hero. The story is built around insults. But the female characters in the film are weak. The second gender, mother, wife, sister, daughter, etc., has all been decided on the basis of the state as a secondary role. A girlfriend who does not stop a lover who trespasses, even if she is a lover. Calling her Sami after marriage. The protagonist talks about women's rights and women's issues while portraying a bad character. He forgot that he was also doing that. For this, the director deserves praise. Usually, an item song is sung by a young woman, and for such a song, a woman with a white skin tone is chosen. In the film, the protagonist talks about women's rights and the director demonstrates similarly, if the heroine of a story is a stereotype that she must be of colour, there will be no other women in the town who wear white except her. The protagonist, including his friends, will be of the state. The director has completely overplayed the image of beauty as white in the film. This happened without his knowledge. Although the villain of the story is white, the story becomes more complicated when it comes to the heroines, and the usual stereotypes remain.

Bigil

Bigil Michael (Vijay) Vijay starts his life as a football player. He has acted in several places. Rayappan (as Michael's father). He is killed and after that Michael becomes a rowdy. Michael turns his father's enemy into his own. When the football player he was with is a coach, the people who came to kill Michael attack his friend. So when the girls preparing for the women's football tournament don't have a coach, Vijay (Michael) fills that spot. If he goes there, the women's team won't want him as the coach. Football Syndicate member, Rayappan's enemy Michael becomes a formidable opponent. Michael defeats him by having 11 women play football. It is a shame to name a screenplay written with women as Bigil. Also, at the end of the film, Bigil, the title of the women's namesake, will be all the women's designs. The girls who played football have their friend as their coach. But the 11 girls who play with Vijay are portrayed as not knowing football. Vijay will win those 11 girls alone. bigil movie portrays a woman as if she can't do this without a man. Nayanthara comes in irrelevant in order to make her relevant. A typical boring movie, Nayanthara plays

a role like Thenral.The director has completely deceived himself by naming the film bigil and then claiming that it is a dedication to women. Two different stories have emerged in the screenplay. The film, claiming to be for women, does not tell a story about women, and instead keeps the character of Rayappan, who played the role well, intact, and follows the stereotype in the name of breaking the stereotype

Arjun Reddy

Arjun Reddy, a college student, loves a girl who studies in his college. He stalks her and makes her fall in love with him. The girl's family does not want to give him a girl, so the frustrated heroine's father pushes him away. Despite his pushback, a doctor who makes a living by smoking cigarettes eventually marries the heroine while she is pregnant.   In the movie Arjun Reddy, the hero will be white and the hero's companion will be black. The director of this movie, Sandeep vanga Reddy, seems to have a reactionary mind-set and a wrong view of women. You can feel it through your films. The stereotype of women being second centre is very strong in your films. I liked the scene of stalking and forcing women without any right to their own feelings. This film has created an ideology that women prefer men who live their lives intoxicated by a few cigarettes. Arjun Reddy continues to portray failure in love as smoking cigarettes, smoking ganja, and consuming alcohol. In today's era, lovers have focused on having sex, and the scene where the heroine says that we have had sex so many times is painful. Arjun Reddy has denigrated love and lovers. Arjun Reddy is filled with color stereotypes, caste stereotypes, and then Women stereotypes. It is a pity that this has been translated into other languages.

Velaikaran

The film Velaikkaran is a Tamil film starring Sivakarthikeyan, Nayanthara, RJ Balaji, Robo Shankar, Fahad fasil, Prakash Raj and others and directed by Mohan Raja. The story of the film can be said to be a drama about the food of today. The changes that are happening in the middle of five corporate companies for the sake of taste and colour are not according to the procedure announced by the government, but the corporate companies are using the food systems for their own gain. Sivakarthikeyan detects some of the schemes that are happening and progresses (Arivu). Sivakarthikeyan uses the same scheme to infiltrate other companies and manipulate Fahad fasil to make his company the first company. Powerful, who initially came for help, eventually turns into a villain. The attempt made by Sivakarthikeyan is eventually implemented by the employees of the five corporate companies. Although the story was strong, many people could not understand the

subconscious mistakes that happened because the screenplay was strong. The director initially introduces the hero from a slum. A natural mistake has been defined. All the young people are black. The portrayal that men and women, adults, working people and unemployed people in this society are all black continues to follow us without us knowing. But the heroine that the hero loves is also a character that comes out of nowhere as usual. She looks white. Why is he not a black woman but a white woman? The disease that is hidden inside us without us knowing tomorrow, similarly, the supporting character who comes to Sivakarthikeyan will also be black.

Rx100

RX 100 is a Telugu film directed by Ajay Bhupathi starring Karthikeya Kummagonda as the protagonist and payal Rajput as the heroine. The heroine is a big family woman and the protagonist is a servant with his servants. She loves him and he loves him too. In the end, they try to get him married to someone else. She gets married and the one who fought against it dies. Let's see a little more than the superficial view. A woman loves a man's strong body. She only loves his body, so she puts more emphasis on having sex with him. The protagonist, who does not know anything about it, falls in love with her and wants her to be his wife. He follows her after telling her that he wants to see her face. she decides to marry someone else. Due to the intrigue of that woman, the protagonist gets stabbed by that woman and dies. There she makes it clear that all I wanted was your body, that's all. A man in that group is the one who is handsome and has a strong body, so the woman chooses him. Even if he does not have bad habits, it is okay. The director finally recorded that this is a true incident. This recording is something that our society does not need now and never. Because she is a big housewife, she is white-skinned as usual. Even though the protagonist is like that, this is a story of a woman who is wrong. This is a story of a woman who is wrong. Then the scene of using him only for his desires is disgusting. Finally, the scene she was killing him makes you feel disgusted.

CONCLUSION

In movies, the scenes we have seen recorded by others without our knowledge continue to follow us in our knowledge. Moreover, sometimes the knowledge that old things should be old can also prevent us from developing our knowledge. I saw a short film in which we had to make and submit a short film in a day's time. For that, two men and a woman would search for a character. In the end, after agreeing that a character was right, and knowing what kind of character it was, they would back down and say, "I have to do this, and after I

can't do it." It would be a female character. They would start searching for the character again. When they were nearing the final stage, a woman from a Slum background would agree to act in the short film. The only thing left for the three who went looking for them was surprise. They were surprised that they were not aware that they were people of Slum, but the portrayal that they would be like this in this land surprised them and helped them change their thinking. They even changed the short film. In this way, we have people from this community, people from this town, people from this place. Such thoughts keep following us. These are the portrayals of terrorists. Even if there is no need, a female character is mainly the heroine's role for the economic profit that creates the need. In a story, a cook in a big house may be a job, but it is wrong for him to be different from them in terms of colour. The same character is not created like that when a senior actor plays it. Another family that affected me, one of them stands in front of a shop and wants to buy chocolate and eat it. He is dressed in white and fancy clothes. The person who wants to buy it is wearing a torn shirt and dirty pants without wearing shoes. The person who wants to buy that chocolate is chased away from the shop without knowing the name of the chocolate. Because he did not give the money he was told, he comes back three days later with the amount and buys that chocolate. He gives it to another child. I do not understand why a person who wants to buy a chocolate has to be so black and cannot even smile. The stories and character designs are being circulated in today's generation. If we want to change this, we can change the next generations as well. The directors should also create a change based on the next generations.

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