

Representations of Gender Identities in Contemporary South Indian Tamil Film

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Abstract:

Cinema is a popular media for entertainment, and also plays a key role in shaping people's ideas, behaviors, and gender roles through reinforcing popular cultural values and practices. Three movies, *Paddayappa*, *Podaa Podi*, and *22 female kottayam*, are selected to discuss the gender identities and their representations in movies. The two movies *Padayappa* and *Podaa Podi* clearly portray gender identities, roles and how a Tamil men and women should act in the society. However, *22 female kottayam* breaks the traditional notion of gender behaviors of norms regarding being a woman. Most of the Tamil movies are male centric, and portray men's dreams, their aspirations, their tragedies, their revenge, and their life, while women are often portrayed as secondary subjects to men, as their lovers, wives, and mothers. Additionally, women seem to be prioritized in movies, but they often get the marginalized position. In each of these films, the men, heroes, are clearly the saviors, and they are focused on throughout the theme plot. In most of the movies, heroes are portrayed as masculine, strong, aggressive, fighting with villains, taking responsibility to protect his wife and family and have the power to change the society. Tamil cinema portrays the division of "good" and "bad" women as in clear cut as black and white divides. The division between "good" and "bad" women is clearly depicted through their physical features, language, dress, and body structures. Additionally, chaste, intelligent, motherly, and divine are some of the potential characters that a "good woman" embodies, while the "bad woman" contains some characters such as a temptress, greedy, cruel, and unkind. Though the majority of the films focus on hero centric theme, there are some female centric movies too. However, female centric movies also present some feminine characteristics such as kind, obedient, and divine. These movies have not been as successful as hero centric movies.

Introduction

Cinema is a popular media for entertainment, which plays a crucial role in shaping people's opinions and ideas, constructing images and roles of gender and reinforcing cultural values and practices. Indian cinema is one of the oldest and biggest film industries in the world. In addition, it has an annual audience of over 3 billion in its home country and millions more overseas such as in Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal, Singapore, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, and Australia (Velayutham, 2008). Though there are many films made in 20 different languages all over India, the four South Indian film industries including Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam and Kannada represent the largest section of the Indian film industry (Velayutham, 2008).

“The nurturing hero, changing images of MGR,” by Sara Dickey, states that fans make their notebooks or vehicles with the picture of their movie stars (Sara Dickey cited in Velayutham, 2008). Additionally they internalize whatever their favorite movie star does such as adopting their fashion, imitate and act like their favorite stars, and even write blogs, and fan pages for them (Sara Dickey cited in Velayutham, 2008). Additionally, fans create fan clubs, make bill boards on public streets and get involve in charity work to encourage their star's movies or their star's local status (Sara Dickey cited in Velayutham, 2008). It is very common to see in newspapers and internet blogs about fans suicidal for unexpected outcome of the movie or for the movie not being a financial success, build temples for their favorite actress and do cultural ritual ceremonies for their favorite actors' or actresses' billboards or posters. These newspapers, websites and articles show how people are attached to Tamil cinema, and they see it as real part of their life.

Considering Tamil cinema, there has been little research done on this topic (Velayutham, 2008). Since Tamil cinema consist of millions of audience all over the world, it is important to analyze the gender portrayal in Tamil cinema. Tamil cinema provides entertainment for ample of audience, through emphasizing the popular form of cultural values and beliefs regarding gender (Velayutham, 2008). Gender related norms and stereotypes play a vital role in determining the characteristics of gender division, and thus, it is important to understand the portrayal of women and men on screen. This paper analyses the representations of gender in ordinary South Indian movies. Additionally, it also highlights how south Indian films are limited itself in defining gender, and how they contribute to construct gender based expectations and attitudes in the society. In this paper, three movies, *Paddayappa*, *Podaa Podi*, and *22 female kottayam*, are selected to discuss the gender identities and their representations in movies. The two movies *Padayappa* and *Podaa Podi* clearly portray gender identities, roles and how a Tamil men and women should act in the society. However, *22 female kottaymam* breaks the traditional notion of gender behaviors of norms regarding being a woman. These three movies are taken an example to support the overall portrayal of gender in South Indian Tamil Cinema.

It is important to define the concept of gender in terms of analyzing the influence of media in shaping gender norms and values. According to United Nations, gender refer to “the social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female and the relationships between women and men and girls and boys, as well as the relations between women and those between men” (United Nations). Gender is a social construction, and these gender roles, behaviors, activities and attributes are learned through the socialization process (United Nations). The expected, valued and accepted behavior for men and women are determined by the society (United Nations). Gender is more fluid, which means it can be

changeable and differ from according to context and culture (United Nations). For both men and women, many societies assign certain roles, responsibilities, rights access to and control over resources, and decision making, which creates inequality. Additionally, gender is part of the broader socio-cultural context (United Nations).

Tamil cinema encompasses every aspect of everyday life of Tamil society (Velayutham, 2008). Additionally, it provides a collection of cultural identity, and broadcasts the dominant social values, beliefs and norms regarding masculinity and femininity (Velayutham, 2008). It imposes social role and behaviour of male and female through emphasizing the cultural and religious epics (Velayutham, 2008). In particular, Tamil Movies emphasize on Male and female bodies (Velayutham, 2008). For instance, Tamil masculinity is characterized by the having a moustache, strong physical abilities, authority, and the capacity to control women (Velayutham, 2008). Femininity is portrayed as having the virtues of obedience, purity and chastity (Velayutham, 2008). Films are produced in the target of entertaining ample of Tamil cinema, male and female gender identities remain fixed and unchanged. According to the article, the cultural history and politics of south Indian Tamil Cinema, the author, Velayutham states that “Tamil cinema reproduces the patriarchal order privileging and normalizing the position of men, and the subordination and oppression of women (Velayutham, 2008).” Considering the root of Tamil cinema, Dravida Munnetra Kazagam, political party, has a significant role in influencing Tamil cinema, and it used cinema as the medium to reinforce its identity, political opportunities and Tamil culture (Velayutham, 2008). Through films, it impose the Tamil identity and culture for both men and women (Sathiavathi cited in Velayutham, 2008).

Synopsis of *Padayappa*

Padayappa is an Indian Tamil movie, released in 1999, written and directed by K.S. Ravikumar. This is one of the blockbuster movies and ran for more than 200 days.

Considering the movie, *Padayappa*, the hero, is an engineer comes to his village to attend her sister's wedding. On the way to home, *Padayappa* becomes famous among the villagers for kissing the snake when all the villagers were afraid even to see a snake. By watching this incidence, *Nilambari* admires *Padayappa*'s braveness.

In the meantime, *Padayappa*'s brother claims the share of the family wealth. Since the family property should not be divided according to their family tradition, *Padayappa*'s father hands over his all property to his brother without dividing it. After, they get the property, his uncle forcefully chases *Padayappa*'s family, and thus, *Padayappa*'s father dies in a heart attack. *Padayappa*'s sister's marriage cancels as they could not give dowry to the groom's family. *Padayappa* and his family moves to live in a barren land, and later he discovers that the land contains granite. Soon after, using the land's richness, he becomes very wealthy and famous among the villagers. Later, his sister gets married to an engineer, and *Padayappa* becomes a village leader by maintaining his father's position in the village.

Nilambari and her servant, *Vasundhara*, fall in love with *Padayappa*, but *Padayappa* falls in love with *Vasundhara* as she fits the expectation of a Tamil woman. When *Nilambari*'s parents finds out that *Nilambari* is madly in love with *Padayappa*, they beg *Padayappa*'s mother to accept their daughter as a daughter in law. However, *Padayappa*'s mother accepts the *Vasundhara* as her daughter in law. *Nilambari*'s father commits suicide in humiliation, and *Nilambari* decides to kill *Vasundhara*, which later is not successful.

After the wedding, Nilambari locked herself in a room for 18 years with a humiliation and anger for not having Padayappa as her partner. Nilambari becomes out of her room, when he likes the plot of her brother's plan for taking revenge on Padayappa. Padayappa becomes a father of two adult daughters. His eldest daughter falls in love with Chandru Prakash, who is the son of Nilambari's brother. Later, Chandru Prakash cheats on Padayappa's eldest daughter, and says to her that he does not really love her. Soon after, Padayappa realizes that Nilambari and her brother are the reason behind it.

Padayappa meets Chandru Prakash and makes him admit that he really love his daughter by supporting him. Then, he decides to kidnap Chandru Prakash from his home and bring him to the marriage ceremony. Nilambari's brother sends some gangsters to stop the marriage and kill both Padayappa and his son. During the fight, Nilambari's brother is killed in an accident. Padayappa brings Chandru Prakash on time to the wedding and make the couple get married. Nilambari reaches the temple, where the marriage is conducted, to kill Padayappa. During the marriage ceremony, Padayappa saves her life from a bull which tries to attack Nilambari severely. By knowing this Nilambari shoots herself with a gun by saying that it is better to die rather than being saved by her enemy (Rao, Narayanan, Prasad & Ravikumar, 1999).

Analysis of *Padayappa* movie

Padayappa is one of the best examples for portraying gender stereotypes and position of women in the Tamil cinema. This movie is dubbed into Telugu and other languages and was hugely welcomed by many audiences. Most of the Tamil movies that are currently promoted have the similar theme. This movie portrays the difference between "good" Tamil women and "bad" Tamil women, and the importance of patriarchy. In the article, "The Tamil film heroine; from a passive object to pleasurable object," Sathiavathi Chinniah points out

that the Tamil cinema portrays the division of “good” and “bad” women as in clear cut as black and white divides (Sathiavathi cited in Velayutham, 2008). The division between “good” and “bad” women is clearly depicted through their physical features, language, dress and body structures (Sathiavathi cited in Velayutham, 2008). Additionally, chaste, intelligent, motherly and divine are some of the potential characters that a “good woman” embodies, while the “bad woman” contains some characters such as a temptress, greedy, cruel and unkind (Sathiavathi cited in Velayutham, 2008). Especially, considering women in cinema, through dialogues, songs and visualization, mothers, hero’s lovers, sisters, and widows were represented in terms of “bad” versus “good”, and pure versus impure (Lakshimi cited in Velayutham, 2008).

The movie, *Padayappa*, is one of the best examples that depicts women in terms of “good” versus “bad.” Considering the movie, the hero, and Padayappa lists women into three categories according to their physical appearances. He names the women as “saathveekam” who look divine, equal to female Goddesses such as “Saraswathi” or “Lakshmi,” by wearing the Tamil traditional clothes such as *saree* or *half saree* (Rao, Narayanan, Prasad & Ravikumar, 1999). Additionally, he explains that people will put their hand together and pray to them, when they see them in the traditional dresses, to respect them (Rao, Narayanan, Prasad & Ravikumar, 1999). The second type of women is “prasothakam” who look very sexy by wearing modern dresses such as short skirts and tight pants, and give a feeling of lust (Rao, Narayanan, Prasad & Ravikumar, 1999). According to Padayappa, the last category of women is “bayanakam” the women who look violent from their first sight and give the feeling of fear (Rao, Narayanan, Prasad & Ravikumar, 1999). When his friends ask him, what type of women that he is fallen in love, he proudly says that I love the woman, who belongs to the category of “saathveekam” (Rao, Narayanan, Prasad & Ravikumar, 1999). This movie

shapes women and their characteristics in terms of “good” versus “bad” through emphasizing their physical appearances and dressing codes.

In most of the Tamil cinema, the “good” woman is poor, beautiful and the epitome of Tamil culture, while the “bad” woman is wealthy, English-educated, interested in social work and ill-mannered. In this movie, the heroine speaks less as speaking less is considered as one of the characteristic of “good” Tamil woman. Additionally, the villain in this movie is a woman, which is included to differentiate the “good” woman versus the “bad” woman. Vasundhara is portrayed as wearing traditional dresses, very religious, divine, and submissive by obeying the elderly and her husband, and shy to talk to men. In contrast, the Nilambari is portrayed as wearing modern dresses such short skirts and pants, aggressive, disobedient, and disrespectful, talk against men and is less religious. In one of the scenarios, Nilambari tries to slap across Vasundhara’s face. Then, Padayappa prevents it and advises her

A woman should behave with patience, but should not rush like you. A woman should be obedient and respectful to others, but should not act like insolent; a woman should be submissive, but should not dominate others; a woman should follow and maintain the social rules, but should not be disobedient like you. And, in overall, a woman should act like a woman. You know one thing, anger is the cause of all miseries, one should know how to control it, and otherwise life will become misery. Last, but not least, there is no historical evidence that a woman, who can get angry easily lived happily throughout her life.

(Rao, Narayanan, Prasad & Ravikumar, 0.34.57- 0.35.32.1999).

Even today this dialogue is very famous among Tamil youth. This dialogue again points out that how a Tamil woman should dress, speak and act in the patriarchal society.

The characteristics such as being patient, submissive, obedient, and follow the social rules and traditions are highlighted as “good” while, anger, insolent, and dominance over men are portrayed as “bad” characteristics. Similarly, the following dialogue shows how cinema shapes the gender roles and characteristics.

Nilambari: You are lucky because I like you. Many men proposed me by looking at my beauty, wealth, educational skills and talent. But, I did not like any of them.

When you save the snake, I liked your daring. When you eradicate the illegal activities, I liked your anger and motivation. When you controlled the violent bull, I liked your bravery. When you advised me in my house, I liked your speech. Above all, I like your style very much. You are very lucky because you have all the characteristics that I expect from a man. I want everything best in my life; my car, dress, bungalow, my bed room and even from a dog to a man that I am going to get married. You are the one in the best. Tell to everyone in your sister’s wedding that we are in love.

Padayappa: (claps) Ma’am. Just a minute. You told about your wish, but you did not listen to my opinion. I do not love you. You like to marry a man, but I like to marry a woman. You are not the woman that I am in love.

(Rao, Narayanan, Prasad & Ravikumar, 0.39.59- 0.41.45, 1999).

Again this dialogue stress out that Nilambari is a bad woman, and woman should not adopt characteristics like her such as straight forwardness, anger and dominance. However, the hero’s characteristic is emphasized as the perfect and stress out that a Tamil man should have similar masculine characteristics. Sathiavathi points out that the portrayal of women in terms of good versus bad in Tamil cinema is never been a questionable subject. Nevertheless,

the binary division is portrayed as clear-cut and in an uncomplicated way. Additionally, by referring to Lakshmi's article, Sathiavathi illustrates that "the binary of the good and bad woman is constructed and resolved neatly through the creation of archetypical social roles such as the daughter, the sister, the wife, the mother and so on who have an obligation to a male figure" (Sathiavathi cited in Velayutham, 9, 2008).

Further, women are portrayed as secondary subjects to men, as their lovers, wives, and mothers (Sathiavathi cited in Velayutham, 2008). Additionally, women seem to be prioritized in movies, but they often get the marginalized position (Lakshmi cited in Velayutham, 2008). For instance, mothers are portrayed as the guidance for their sons, proud to call their sons as warriors, and happy to be under controlled by their sons (Lakshmi cited in Velayutham, 2008). In one of the scenario, when Padayappa's uncle through more than ten gangsters threatens Padayappa and his mother to sign in the property (Rao, Narayanan, Prasad & Ravikumar, 1999), Padayappa's mother proudly looks at her son, and tells him to finish the fight and come home soon (Rao, Narayanan, Prasad & Ravikumar, 1999). Also, Padayappa in many scenarios sees his mother as a Goddess and tells that he respects his mother more than God. Further, in movies the importance of motherhood is portrayed as a compulsory duty, and family is honored and given much more importance in the Tamil culture. Also, usually the mother's role in Tamil films maintains the patriarchal rules of the family. The mother is represented a symbol of love, while the heroine, the ideal women is portrayed as maintaining her virginity, remaining pure and chastity until she is married to a man.

In this movie, the heroine, Vasundhara does not have any main character as the hero Padayappa has. Usually mothers are portrayed as divine, example of being a good wife, love and kindness (Sathiavathi cited in Velayutham, 2008). In this movie, there are many

similarities in the portrayal of Tamil women; think about and worry about her husband, sing songs about as they stay intimately together while maintain her virginity, and prepare herself for marriage (Sathiavathi cited in Velayutham, 2008). Vasundhara sings songs and dance together with her lover Padayappa before her marriage while maintaining her virginity. Virginity is emphasized in movies is not only maintained in the absence of their sexual relationship before marriage, but also in protecting their virginity through wearing modest dresses and having less interaction with men.

From the beginning of the Tamil cinema history, there have been many male centric movies and men are portrayed as firm, steady, courageous and active (Lakshmi cited in Velayutham, 2008). While, there are few movies that are played out based on female centric, and women were not given importance as men and they were just showed a pleasurable objects (Lakshmi cited in Velayutham, 2008). Men's conflicts, their dreams, revenge, tragedies, aspiration and heroism are screened in the movies (Sathiavathi cited in Velayutham, 2008). Moreover, in this movie, Padayappa is portrayed as a supreme version of hero and male character. The movie is about Padayappa's life, his dream of marrying the woman he has fallen in love, his revenge on his enemies, and how he becomes successful in his life. In most of the movies, heroes are portrayed as masculine, strong, aggressive, fighting with villains, take responsibility to protect his wife and family and have the power to change the society.

In each of these films, the men, heroes, are clearly the saviors, and they are focused throughout the theme plot. Usually, the female characters, heroines or mothers and sisters, are included in a certain action scenarios; it is mainly because to be saved by the hero. Considering *Padayappa* movie, the hero saves heroine and the female villain in many

situations from the fierce bull (Rao, Narayanan, Prasad & Ravikumar, 1999). The hero's masculine power is presented by doing unrealistic things that a man cannot do in his real life, such as trying to control a violent bull just by his own feet and fights with many gangsters single handedly (Rao, Narayanan, Prasad & Ravikumar, 1999). Additionally, the hero fights against more than ten gangsters even when he becomes old. Throughout the movie, it is emphasized that when a person is born with penis, he should adopt masculine characteristics such as be strong, assertive and powerful. It also portrays the social norms that women are inferior to men, and they are physically weak. In the movie, though Nilambari is portrayed as powerful women in terms of speaking against men, when she sees a snake, she orders the village men to kill it (Rao, Narayanan, Prasad & Ravikumar, 1999). When the bull tries to attack Vasundhara, she shows the fear in her face and staying stunned in the moment until the hero comes to save her (Rao, Narayanan, Prasad & Ravikumar, 1999)..

Similarly, Tamil movies highlight that men's one of the obligations is to be responsible and able to protect his family and wife in any kind of hazardous situations. After his father dies, Padayappa takes the responsibility of taking care of his mother and earning money for his sister's wedding. Not only in *Padayappa* movie, but also in many Tamil movies it is noticeable that they always portray the Tamil custom and norms that the brother or any male member in the family should have protected his sister and mother.

Movies always highlight men's power, and shows that only men can bring changes in the society. Additionally, after he loses his family properties, by his talent, ability and knowledge, he becomes super rich within few months. Further, he involves in community-based services such as building elders home, helping the poor, handicaps and orphans (Rao,

Narayanan, Prasad & Ravikumar, 1999). In addition, he is equalized to God, and he becomes very famous among people within few months. Further, in most of the Tamil movies, heroes always try to protect the society and country from powerful villains. In this movie, Padayappa sees that his village people are suffering from illegal activities (Rao, Narayanan, Prasad & Ravikumar, 1999). Then, he fights with the villains and eradicate the illegal drugs and other activities from his village (Rao, Narayanan, Prasad & Ravikumar, 1999).

Overall, movies impose certain characteristics for men and women and emphasize how they should perform their gender roles in the patriarchal society. Additionally, it tries to justify the men and women attributes through supporting cultural identity, social values, beliefs and norms regarding masculinity and femininity. Further, it inflicts masculine and feminine attributes through the hero versus villain, the good woman versus bad woman.

Synopsis of *Podaa Podi*

Podaa podi (Get lost boy! Get lost girl!), an Indian Tamil movie released in November 2012, is written and directed by Vignesh Shivan. Considering the movie, Arjun, the hero, is an animation artist and living in London with his uncle Ganesh. One day, Arjun meets Nisha, heroine who is a salsa dancer and living with her Aunt, in a London pub, and they fall in love. When they decide to get married, Arjun asks Nisha to leave dancing as he does not like her attending salsa with her dance male partner Mojo. Thus, Nisha breaks up with Arjun, and later, because of their deep love, they agreed to marry each other.

However, Nisha clearly says to Arjun that she wants to participate in the UK “Let’s Dance competition,” which is her passion and to choose her career in dancing. In contrast to Nisha, Arjun strongly believes that dancing is against the Tamil’s culture, and a woman’s role

is staying in home and nurturing children. Since Nisha continuously going to dance classes with Mojo, Arjun makes her pregnant, with his uncle's advice to make her stay in home.

After having the new baby, Nisha decides to continue her dance class and to participate in the competition with Mojo. In the mean time, Nisha gets to know that Arjun deliberately made her pregnant to make her stay away from dance class. Thus, Nisha argues with Arjun and suddenly, she meets a friend and he greets her with a hug. Arjun gets mad at this and fights with her friend for hugging her. While Nisha tries to stop their fight, the baby meets with an accident and dies. After the incidence, they become separated and live alone. Few months later, Arjun begs her to come back home and live with him.

Nisha comes back to Arjun's home with the condition that she will continue to dance and participate in the competition. Nisha could not pay attention in dancing, when Arjun explains to her that dancing is not appropriate for a Tamil mother. At the same time, Arjun beats up her partner Mojo, and thus Nisha will not have any partners and leave the competition automatically. Then, without a choice, Nisha makes Arjun as her partner, and join in the competition. Since Arjun makes mistakes in the dance competition, they are not selected for the next round. However, as her talent impresses judges, they give her another chance to participate in the round with an option of changing her partner. In the next round, Arjun and Nisha dances one kind of Tamil dances, and selected to enter the next round. When Arjun gets to know that they have to win 14 rounds, again he makes her pregnant deliberately. Finally, the movie ends with both of them living with their new child and Nisha becomes a traditional house wife.

Analysis of *Podaa Podi* movie

Movies portray gender expectations or behaviours in an unrealistic, stereotypical and limited view. This movie, *Podaa podi*, is one of examples of how media shapes us on looking at Tamil men and women. This movie also depicts the stereotypical social expectation of men and women, and indicates that the appropriate role for men and women. Additionally, it portrays the traditional role of men and women through family relationships. Considering the movie *Podaa Podi*, it gives a message how a man and a woman should maintain and carry out their traditional roles and behaviour within the family.

Though men and women have certain assigned responsibilities in the Tamil society, especially women are served as boundary makers of the family, community and the nation. Women's essential role is symbolized as the honour of the family and community, and they are expected to maintain and protect the reputation of family by being a virtuous and "good" Tamil woman. In the article "A good woman, a very good woman; Tamil cinema's women," Lakshmi indicates that Tamil cinema always glorifies 'good' Tamil woman by relating to the ancient Tamil literatures and novels (Lakshmi cited in Velayutham, 2008). For instance, in one of the Tamil literatures, *Silappadikaram* by Ilango Adigal, the heroine Kanagi is portrayed as chaste, intelligent and divine (Lakshmi cited in Velayutham, 2008). From these epics' heroines' characteristics are adapted into Tamil cinema and represented as "good" Tamil woman.

Sathiavathi by referring to Chatterji indicates that depiction of Radha, Sita, Meera, and Savitri are not only widespread in Hindi cinema, but also Tamil movies emphasis the role of the ancient epics (Sathiavathi cited in Velayutham, 2008). Despite from these pan-Indian examples, the Hindu and Tamil traditional women such as Kannaki and Vasuki are

also served as well-known female epitome (Sathiavathi cited in Velayutham, 2008). . Sacredness or spirituality is associated with purity or chastity has been associated with Tamil language and Tamil womanhood from ancient times to the present (Sathiavathi cited in Velayutham, 2008). The majority of the Tamil film heroines' portrayals are similar form that being traditional but with some of the modern changes (Sathiavathi cited in Velayutham, 2008). However, there are some movies in contrast to this majority that portray the heroines different from the traditional and passive way (Sathiavathi cited in Velayutham, 2008). This portrayal can be included in two different categories: progressive and unconventional (Sathiavathi cited in Velayutham, 2008). The progressive heroine, emerged from the Tamil poet Bharati's putumaippen, while she is maintaining her chastity questions the norms that are related to inequality and subordinated condition of the female in the patriarchal society (Sathiavathi cited in Velayutham, 2008). Additionally, it is rare to find a solitary female version of story (Sathiavathi cited in Velayutham, 2008).

Sathiavathi indicates that the characteristic of *Katanayaki* (Heroine) has changed quite from the past eight decade of Tamil cinema portray of characteristics of heroine which are “accam” (fear), “madam” (tenderness), “nanam” (coyness) and “payirppu” (modesty) (Sathiavathi cited in Velayutham, 2008). The majority of the Tamil film heroines portrayal are similar form that being traditional but with some of the modern changes (Sathiavathi cited in Velayutham, 2008). However, there are some movies in contrast to this majority, portrays heroine different from traditional and passive (Sathiavathi cited in Velayutham, 2008). The heroine's appearance including wearing traditional sari and representing passive characteristics have replaced by women wearing modern dresses and having mischievous characteristic, and used as “pleasurable objects” (Sathiavathi cited in Velayutham, 2008)). However, being a secondary position has transformed and continued by giving a huge

importance on chastity (Sathiavathi cited in Velayutham, 2008). Sathiavathi states that indeed, the cultural norms of womanhood in the patriarchal society deceive the role of Tamil heroine being a passive subject or being pleasurable object (Sathiavathi cited in Velayutham, 2008).

In the movie, Nisha was born in London and thus, she does not know any Tamil traditions, however Arjun expects Nisha to follow the culture and protect the honour of being a Tamil Indian woman. Arjun expects Nisha to change according to his wish of being a “good” Tamil woman. In the *Padayappa* movie, good versus portrayal was very crystal clear. However, in this movie, through Arjun’s ideal expectation of Tamil women and Nisha’s inappropriate behaviours, the image of a good woman is presented. For instance, when Arjun and Nisha go to the dance class, Nisha changes her dress publicly. Arjun is shocked when he sees Nisha in a tank top and tight short pants. Through Arjun negative and unwanted face reaction, “good” and appropriate dress and behaviours are highlighted in the movie. Further, in another scenario, when they decide to get marry, both of them are having contradictory ideas about their life style. The following dialogue illustrates it,

Arjun: This is our right age, so we should get married

Nisha: Okay, sounds interesting. Let’s get married

Arjun: ah, how can you agree so simply. It is a big event. How many alterations and changes we have to do. Do you know about it? (Arjun covers Nisha’s clothes to hide her breast)

Nisha: what changes, do we have to make, Arjun?

Arjun: ahh, after we got married, you should listen to me. You have make changes in your life. You have to adjust yourself. You will do it, right?

Nisha: why should I have to do that?

Arjun: (kind of confused). Ah, no? (What kind of brain does she have? How I am going to make her understand about it?) If I say I do not like something, will you accept it?

Nisha: yeah, if it seems wrong, I will change it.

Arjun: If I tell, I do not like Mojo, Dancing, pants, hugging and kissing others, will you change it?

Nisha: What's the connection between these things and our marriage? Are you crazy. You do one thing. Change yourself according to my style of life. Join my friends group and hang around with my friends, so that we can have fun together.

Arjun: hey, I cannot live a very bad life like you.

Nisha: bad? What did you say, Bad?

Arjun: no, it is not good to live like this. A "good" woman will not do like this.

Nisha: Am I not a good woman, Arjun? What are you trying to say?

Arjun: I did not mean that way, but a good a woman will not do like this.

(Kumar, Kumar, & Vignesh Shivan, 33.20 to 34.50, 2012)

This dialogue emphasizes that Nisha's activities such as dancing and hanging out with friends is not appropriate for a "good" Tamil women. Especially, while Arjun is talking to her; he covers her breast with her coat, by indicating that she should dress up according to Tamil Traditional norms, that any kind of dresses that indicate modesty.

Additionally, women have two important roles in the Indian commercial films in terms of social norms. One is the mother, who is equalized to the ultimate form of feminine power, the Goddess. Other one is the wife, who is usually portrayed based on the

mythological character of “Sitha”, (the characteristic of extreme devotion to the husband). In this movie, it implicitly express the good wife should have the characteristic of “Sitha.” The stereotypical norms and expectation of a society is revealed through the character of Arjun. Arjun not only expects Nisha to be obeying his order, through his certain activities he proofs that women should behave like the character of “Sitha” or “Savithiri.” For example, in the movie, in some part, the couple has agreed to act based on their wishes. Arjun asks her to wakes up early in the morning, get blessing from him by touching his feet, wearing “saree” and taking care of cooking and other households’ chores.

Movies take mostly the perspective of the male audience, and perceive women in a certain way or with the stereotypical characters. In this movie, through the character of Arjun, the director listed certain characteristic for a “good” wife. First, in the movie, Arjun make a list of good and bad characteristics of Nisha. Arjun sees Nisha’s love for him as one of the good characteristics. On the other hand, he thinks going to salsa dance, having a male dance partner, and having many friends as bad characteristics of a woman. Additionally, on his birthday, Arjun asks Nisha to come to his house at night. When she comes to his house, Arjun says to himself that Indian Tamil women will not do like that going to a male house at night. As Sathiavathi mentions, though women dressing style has been changed from traditional to modern to some extent, maintaining chastity and purity are given more importance (Sathiavathi cited in Velayutham, 2008). In this movie, Nisha’s dressing method is accepted by Arjun to some extent, he expects Nisha to be pure and modest. Further, in Tamil movies virginity of a woman is given importance than to a male. Male characters, especially the hero having many girl friends does not portray negatively. By contrast, a woman having many male friends is portrayed negatively. Women’s virginity is maintained by avoiding close

verbal and physical interaction with men. In a scenario, Nisha's male friend greets her with a hug and kiss. Arjun gets annoyed by her act and responds;

Nisha, we are in London. We can dresses nicely, go to club, dance and eat pizza and burger. But we are not whites. I am a Tamilan and we have a certain culture. I have never seen my mother or sister hugging or kissing other men. I feel disgusted by his act. When the man tries to kiss you, you should slap on his face. When he tries to hug you, should slap him with your slipper. That's what a Tamil woman should do. Do not forget it.

(Kumar, Kumar,& Vignesh Shivan, 1.13.50 to1.15.08, 2012)

The above scenario and dialogue again indicate that how a woman and a good wife should act in the patriarchal society. In another scenario, Arjun beats Mojo deliberately, and thus, Mojo rejects to dance with Nisha. Then, Nisha asks what the reasons that make him angry are? Arjun replies that what is the difference between me and Mojo because he also touches her body parts. Then, Nisha says that I can feel the difference between you and my dance partner. This scenario reflects the Tamil traditional and cultural norms that women are husband's property. It is noticeable that in the both *Padayappa* and *Podaa Podi* movies, maintain virginity and modesty are given importance. Also, Sathiavathi states from ancient time to present, purity and sacredness together has been embodied in Tamil language and Tamil womanhood (Sathiavathi cited in Velayutham, 2008).

At last, Nisha realises that dancing with another male is wrong and which is against her culture. Actually, in this film, though Nisha's ambition is to win in the dance competition, she is forced by her husband to change her male partner and some of her attitudes. The message is clear in the movie that wifehood is a duty and she should follow

some certain rules to achieve the role of being a good wife. Family is considered as the pillar of Tamil culture, and thus in this movie. Thus, Nisha's characteristics are portrayed in a humiliated way by reflecting that her characteristics are against the Tamil culture. For each of her action, through the character of her husband, Arjun, it is highlighted how a Tamil wife should behave in the family and society.

Further, Arjun says that in movies only actresses hug or kisses other men. However, in reality, it is difficult to follow the movie. Thus, this movie, *Podaa Podi* gives the message that movies portray stories based on the reality. In the end, Arjun makes Nisha pregnant, so that she will not participate in the competition and will be in house as a traditional housewife. The ending not only indicates the dominance of the patriarchal society, but also it is filmed in a way that the audience could accept the ending.

Synopsis of *22 female kottayam*

22 female kottayam, an India Malayalam movie released in 2012, is directed by Aashiq Abu. The film portrays a story of a young brave nurse, and how she takes revenge on her husband and his friend for treating her badly. Tessa is a nurse, lives in Bangalore with a plan of going to Canada to continue her career. She meets Cyril, who is a travel consultancy agent, and falls in love with him. Soon after, they decide to live together, as Tessa has only few months to stay in Bangalore

One day while Tessa and Cyril are at pub, a man misbehaves with Tessa and Cyril beats him severely. Cyril hides in his boss Hegde house, when he knows that the man is trying to take revenge on him. To inform about the situation, the boss Hegde comes to Cyril's home, and then he asks Tessa Frankly that he wants to have sex with her. When Tessa denies, the boss assault her cruelly and raped her. Though Cyril knows the entire plan, he acts violently in front of Tessa and tells her that he wants to kill the boss. Tessa convinces

Cyril to not to go to court, and tells him that he just wanted to live with him happily and to go to Canada as soon as possible. When Tessa recovers from her injuries, Cyril sends a message to Hedge saying that she has recovered well. Thus, again Hedge visits to Cyril's home when he is not there and rape her for the second time.

After this incidence, Tessa decides to stay in India to take revenge and kill the Boss Hegde. Cyril reveals Tessa's plan to his boss and boss suggests him to kill Tessa. Then, Cyril intentionally put some drugs in her bag, and escapes from the situation by leaving her alone. Later, police arrests Tessa and imprison her. At that time, Cyril moves to Cochin and starts a modelling agency. While Tessa is in prison, she becomes a friend to Zubeida who is a pregnant but sentenced for murdering her husband. Through Zubeida only Tessa gets to know that, Cyril is a womanizer and he cheated many girls with the help of his boss Hegde. Zubeida gives her strength and courage, and supports her to take revenge on them by making her connect with his brother.

Soon after, she was released by the court, and she meets DK, powerful politician in the society, and agrees to fulfil his demand of having sex with him if he helps to achieve her plans. With the help of DK, she kills the boss Hegde by tying his legs with a poisonous snake. Next day, she travels to Cochin and reaches Cyril's office by pretending to be a model. However, Cyril recognizes her and beats her by knowing that she came to take revenge on him. He insults her that she cannot do anything, as she is just a woman. Then, Cyril becomes calm, when Tessa tells that she wanted to be with him, and they spend the whole day together.

In the next morning, when he becomes conscious, Cyril realizes that Tessa fooled him and anaesthetized him. Tessa tells him that she has removed his male organ penis through a medical surgery. Tessa makes him realize that he cannot have sex anymore and he needs to

dependent in everything. Whenever Cyril becomes angry, blood comes out from his organ and Tessa watches his suffering continuously for three days.

After three days, Tessa makes him realize that she really loved him and he lost her true love. Cyril admits his faults and realizes and appreciates her braveness. When Tessa tells him that she got visa to go to Canada, Cyril tells her that if he really wanted to be with her, he will go to Canada to find her. Finally, the movie ends when Tessa before leaves India, take her cell phone SIM card and throw it to and cuts further contact with DK, who is waiting for her to have sex (Sunil & Abu, 2012).

Analysis of *22 female kottayam*

The movie, *22 female kottayam* is a female centric, which portrays of how she faces struggles as a woman and how she overcomes it throughout her life. Though it is a Malayalam movie, Tamil movies and Malayalam movies have close connection. Many Malayalam movies are dubbed or remade into Tamil. Additionally, both kinds of the movies portray similar themes by imposing certain characteristics for male and females. This movie challenges the gender expectations, roles and norms. Movies portray gender expectations or behaviors in an unrealistic, stereotypical and limited view. However, this movie is portrayed in a way that break the gender related norms and roles. In this movie, Tessa is already divorced woman, but falling in love with the Cyril. In Tamil or Malayalam movies, it is very uncommon that a divorced woman falling in love with another man. Most of the movies emphasize monogamy that a woman should have being married to only one person. Movies rarely portray a divorced or widowed woman marrying another person as it is associated with socio cultural practices. Many movies characterize good divorced and widowed woman by

showing her that she maintains her status by not being married, and dedicates her entire self to raise her children and looking after her family members .

Additionally in this movie, Tessa is drinking alcohol when she is having a party with Cyril at night, and shows that she is a better drinker than Cyril. Normally, in Tamil movies women who drinks, and go out at night for parties are portrayed as women who have bad characters. This movie breaks the norm that women should not drink, and it has been shown in a positive way that she can hold liquor more than the man, or Cyril. However, this scene has been criticized by many viewers for showing a Christian women drinking alcohol and generalizing that all woman are like her.

Further, without getting engaged to or marrying Cyril, Tessa has agreed to live with him, and to have sexual intercourse. In Tamil or Indian culture, before marriage, women are expected to protect and maintain their virginity. Women, who break the cultural and religious codes, will be considered as bad women. However, in this movie, living together with her partner is shown positively, and which is very uncommon in Tamil and Malayalam cinema. At the beginning of the story, Tessa is portrayed as a typical woman who has the feminine characteristic such as fear, divine, modesty and softness. She gets afraid and does not have the courage to face the rapist, the prisoners and the lady who shared her room in the jail. Later on, she becomes empowered by herself, and by others including those who betrayed her and the prisoners. Finally, she plans to take revenge on those who mistreated her, by using the help of the political leader, who is also a womanizer. The way she take revenge on the both the rapist and the cheater is different and unique. She ties the poisonous cobra on the rapist leg, and removes the male genitalia of Cyril. Her action questions the feminine character such as fear, kindness, and softness.

Conclusion:

In the world, in most of the societies, gender and sex is viewed as a dichotomy, which is penis versus vagina, or male versus females, or and man versus woman. Not only does this dichotomy or binary division of gender divide people into two categories, but also imposes certain characteristics, behaviours, expectations, roles and functions for each gender category. Tamil movies also represent these gender binaries, appropriate roles and behaviors of men and women. It portrays men's dream, their aspiration, their tragedy, their revenge and their life. While, women are portrayed as secondary subjects to men, as their lovers, wives, and mothers. Additionally, women are seemed to be prioritized in movies, but they often get the marginalized position. In both *Padayappa* and *Podaa Podi*, are good examples for women are portrayed as a subordinate subject. Additionally, the division of "good" versus "bad" portrayed clear cut as black and white divides in these two movies. The division between "good" and "bad" women is clearly depicted through their physical features, language, dress and dialogue. Though Tamil cinema produces some female centric movies, they do not hit as block buster movies like hero centric movie. Further, considering the three movies, it emphasizes the gender binaries, and heterosexual relationship. It is very uncommon to find portrayal of third gender and other sexualities in Tamil movies as they are against the binary division and heteronormativity in the Tamil society. Hence, Tamil Cinema should broaden its view rather than limiting itself portraying gender binaries.

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