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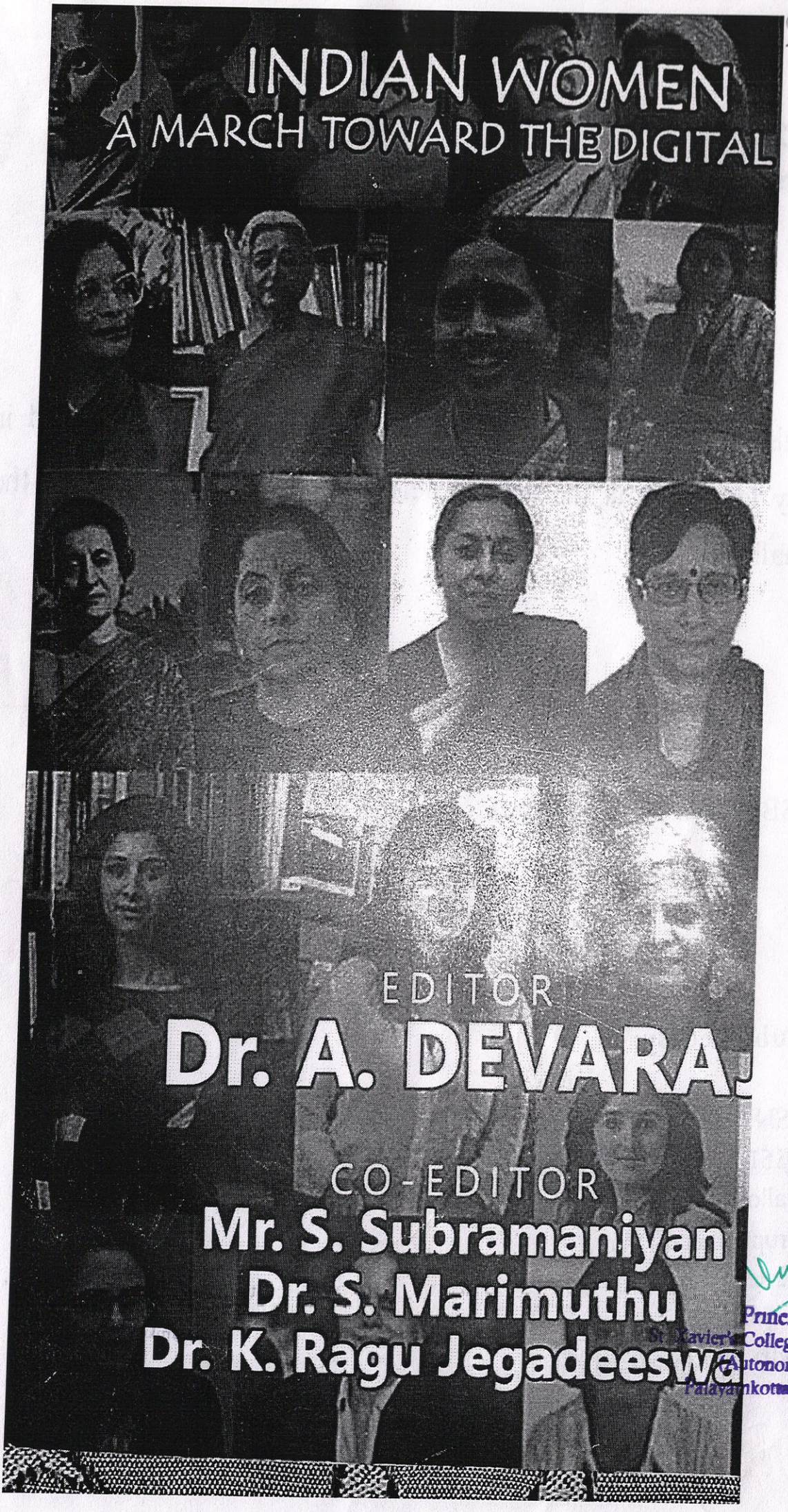

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IS THE PORTRAYAL OF FEMALE CHARACTERS IN TAMIL TV SERIALS UNETHICAL AND DANGEROUS TO THE SOCIAL FABRIC?

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Introduction

Television is an important tool to bring about changes in society. It has the potential to reach every nook and corner of the society. Different issues are being telecasted through Television and vast changes are taking place in the Indian society. People began to break stereotypes and work for the welfare of the society. If there is no proper advertising of any problem, the effect would have been very less and would have remained the same for a long time. In recent years, due to globalization, privatization, liberalization, television describes female characters in different scenario that has unlocked the opportunities of development for women which has its own disadvantages. If the portrayal of female characters in TV serials are not real and not constructive, it may not show the way for any further growth of the status of women. This article highlights the way in which how female characters in Tamil TV serials are portrayed.

Representation of female characters in Media & Television

The representation of female characters in Media and Television are not real but traditional and stereotypical. Female characters are depicted as the objects of sexual desire. While efforts for discourse to change the way women are treated have started, the portrayal of women in media takes ten steps backward. This broaden how female characters are portrayed in various media platform. Sharma (2014) stated that Television is regarded as the most real form by many viewers. If this is the condition, then it is need for us to know how far the portrayal of female characters are shown in media and how this affects the attitude of the viewers . According to Shukla (2015), television can be regarded as an important tool to change the future for women in the right direction in our country.

Ever since, Tamil channels began telecasting serials, the portrayal of female characters have fluctuated between two extreme themes – it may be an embodiment of sacrifice, or the representation of evil character. For the last few decades, Tamil TV serials capture the attention of the common classes, but there is no changes take place. Conceivably most of the TV serials have gone from bad to worse. Many urban and rural women states that serials support them to get relaxed from every day work and they regard watching TV serials is a routine work. Meanwhile, it is important to realize that TV occupies

But it is important to remember that TV still fills the central space in most of the families, and small children grow up internalizing such type of TV serials. Recent serials depict women characters as an ordinary element in their stories which may be seen as a negative perception towards real women. (Lakhsmi, 2018). Planning for murder, abducting, sexual torture, sexual remarks are the subjects that are shown to increase the Television Rating Point. While viewers internalize such themes, the aim of impartiality broaden the social framework remains unconvinced.

Unimaginative Story Narration

Observers and critics have witnessed a similar scorn for the thrifty production quality, unimaginative story narration and prudent thoughts of mega-serials. The concept of the flow, however, certainly does not adequately describe everyone's viewing habits (Allrath,2005). Tamil mega-serials have constantly entertaining women in a silent firmness of an unappreciated housewife. Serials are just a stimulation for them to shed their emotions, for their life situations, without being judged for such outpouring.

Concept of Nuptials

Weddings do not happen without a drama. In many serials, the marriage excitement continues even after the marriage.

In serials such as *Aranmanai Kili* (Vijay TV), *Nejam Marappathillai* (Vijay TV), and *Raja Rani* (Vijay TV) both the boy and girl are compelled to marry by circumstance and start loving. In another mega-serial, Sembartuthi (Zee Tamil), the marriage ceremony turns out with an excitement where he hero loved a domestic worker and trying the holy-knot by deceiving his mother. In *Kanmani* (Sun TV), the marriage was stopped after executing the drama. In Priyamanaval (Sun TV), the show keep progress ever after the marriage, where the heroine's family comes to an understanding that the hero, Kumar's brother made a bogus horoscope to and arrange the marriage. But after the marriage both husband and wife continued to live a separate life.

Concept of Ranking

TV serials promote free use of humiliating words like Velaikkari, which is used as title for the serial. In mega serials like *Raja Rani,* the hero Karthick is compelled to marry Semba, the domestic worker. After the marriage, she keeps on calling

Karthick as *Chinnaya.* In another mega serial Sembaruthi, the boy Aadhi, loves Parvathi, the servant maid. Throughout the serial, Parvathi, calls him *Periaiah.* In another popular serial, *Aranmani Kili,* the heroine Jaanu marries Arjun, who was a physically handicapped son of Jaanu father's employed Meenakshi. Throughout the show, she dubs her husband as 'sir. Further, she naps in the kitchen and remain patiently for his approval. Generally, women are portrayed as quiet, submissive and vulnerable in TV serials. Ideally they were the most obedient daughter, the sweetest sisters, the perfect mothers and idealistic wives. It is not a myth but a journey that despite all the debates, serials have contributed massively to the growth of Indian television and growing audience (Jayathi Kumar, 2020)

Concept of Heinousness

Putting an end to marriage and planning for murders, the wickedness are highlighted in female characters. In the serial *Sembaruthi*, the enemy abducts the bride, Parvathi and hides her in a temple and removes her robes not to run away. In *Nengam Marappathillai,* the villain Sathy, plans many ways with rowdies to take vengeance against the heroine Saranya, to wed Vikram, who was her ex-boy friend. In Aranmanai Kili, Durga plans to conspire against her aunt Meenakshi is many ways. She plotted against her son Arjun in the matter of marriage. Characteristically, these female characters wears good dress and remains at their home Sometimes they wear heavy jewels with expensive costumes.

In Tamil serials, robbing the jewels of their rivals and putting the blame on other woman, sending them to survive in jail are very common. The recent serial *Selva Magal*, gone to an extent of casing a snake in a wedding sari to kill the heroine so that the bride would be killed, so that her daughter would be married to the hero. Most of the subject matters of drama serials are conflict between daughter and mother-in-laws. They find opportunities to take revenge against each other, which breaks the

normal relationship among daughter and mother-in-laws. Similar negativity is seen in the way wives actually behave with people at home. The negative characters portrayed in the serials are attracting many towards TV serials as they convey plotless negativism (Deccan Chronicle, 12th Nov,2022). Naturally, airing such type of serial would make the daughter-in-laws and mother-in-laws see as their enemies. In such a way, these serials are instigating conflicts in the family. Furthermore, problems between sisters and brothers with regard to property and rights are also telecasted in serials which has less developmental thoughts.

Ancient thought and Existing Myths:

Characteristically, heroines of recent TV serials swift to saris even after their marriage and goes to medical colleges is seen common in story making. It is seen that men entering into the kitchens in Tamil Serials. Seldom they can be witnessed to be with their wife when they are not well. In return, the wives are expected to be perpetually thankful to their husband. In *Ponnukku Thanga Manasu,* the heroine, Divya rose from a lower-middle class family, is wedded to a comparatively rich Prashanth, and later Sethu lakshmi, who the mother-in-law of Divya demanded to procure more dowry. On the contrary, Divya, would not even file a case in police station or leave the house or lose her husband. In the serial, *Aranmanai Killi,* the character Jaanu depends on Ayurvedic medicines to treat her husband's disability. The expertise in Ayurveda shows lot of rigorous ways and methods to worship as a part of treatment. This type of medical myths are quiet common in TV serials.

Plot Construction in Tamil Mega TV Serials

Baakiyalakshmi

Baakiyalakshmi serial depicts the life of woman Baakiyalakshmi lives in a joint family with her husband

Gopinath, who undergoes many hardships and struggle to make her life happy but it is always dominated and insulted by her family members. The story reflects the situation of women at every home which makes the audience emotionally connect with the show. In real life, it is common to witness women as caring wife, lovable mother, compassionate daughter –in-law in our home and responsible homemaker.

Thendral Vanthu Ennai Thodum

The narrative centres on Abhinaya, who meets Vetri, a local thug who has no respect for any custom, in contrast to Abhinaya who is an educated woman, believes in adhering to cultural norms. Vetri's education is later made known, but that doesn't make up for the gap their differences have caused between them. When Abhinaya assists a young couple in getting married in a temple, Vetri is unaware of the significance of the marital ceremonies. Vetri rushes through the ceremonies out of resentment for the other person and 'accidentally' marries Abhinaya. The act horrifies Abhinaya, and although being furious, Vetri regrets his choices. Whether or whether the two can overcome their disagreements and obstacles to reunite as a relationships forms the rest of the story.

Pandian Stores (Tamil)

The Pandian Stores, a renowned grocery business in family hometown of Kundrakudi, is run by Pandian's four sons, Sathymoorhty, Jeevandandham, Jayakannan and kathiravan. The Pandiyan family's eldest son Sathyamoorthy tries to care for his three younger siblings, Jeeva, Kathir, and Kannan. Lakshmi, his paralysed and widowed mother, also resides with him. Because Sathyamoorthy is penniless and elopes on the wedding day, Malli, the elder daughter of his uncle Murugan, who Sathyamoorthy was betrothed to, is not interested in marrying him. Against the wishes of her family, Dhanalakshmi, a bright, brave young woman

marries Sathyamoorthy and helps the Pandian shop family establish a stable life. She treated her brother-in-sons law's like her own. The plot goes around Dhanam on how she joins the separated relatives after the marriage and entry of the daughter in laws, Meena, Aishwarya and Mullai.

Ninaithale Inikkum

Bommi is a happy, wicked woman whose mother Krishnaveni suffers from a chronic stomach ailment and whose father has passed away. Azhagesan, the father of Bommi, is an innocent brother, but Sakunthala, his wife, is unkind to Bommi. Since Thavamani is wicked, Boomi and Krishnaveni stay away from him despite Sakunthala's wishes for him to wed Bommi. Siddharth (Sid), who has no mother since young age, is a quiet, reclusive man who believes that his father is to blame for her passing and never speaks to him. Father Padmanaban, grandfather Deivanayagam, grandmother Anjali Devi, paternal aunt, Valarmathi, paternal uncle Chidamabram, cousin brothers Lokesh and Vinay, sister Ramya and his own sister Dharshini make up his family. He follows his grandfather's orders because he helped his mother. Sid's friend and coworker Tamannah also has feelings for him, but he doesn't show them to her. This culturally rich tale is about love, loyalty to the family, and traditional Tamil Nadu sweets. The story narrates the lives of Bommi and Sid.

Bharathi Kannamma

The story follows Dr. Bharathi loves and marries a dark skinned intelligent girl Kannamma. But his obsessive one side lover, Dr. Venba vows to destroy Bharathi and Kannamma's relationship and marry Bharathi. The story revolves around the life of Kannamma, simple and pure-hearten girl. She faces lot of trials and tribulations because of her dark complexion.

Thamizhum Saraswathiyum

Saraswathi is subjected to harsh criticism because she failed Class XII. Saraswathi decides to marry and start a family in order to escape the continual criticism. Due to her lack of education, the potential grooms request a larger dowry before they will wed her. In front of her family, this makes her life even more terrible. Thamizh, on the other hand, is a very honourable and responsible man. It is because of the circumstances, he left school and began managing the family business. In addition, due to his lack of education, Kothai (Thamizh's mother) finds it difficult to find a suitable marriage.

Kaatrukkenna Veli

The protagonist of the tale is Vennila, a college student aspiring to be an IAS official. She escapes her wedding with the help of her mother after her father pressures her to get marriage immediately after graduating from high school. Vennila enrolls in the Meenakshi Shivanandham College, which is run and controlled by Sharadha's in-laws, with the assistance of her former instructor Sharadha. Throughout the course of the narrative, Vennila battles for her right to attend college despite constant disagreement from Sharadha's in-laws and from her own family. She overcomes every challenge with the aid of her college friends, Surya, Sharadha's estranged son and her Economics Professor. Vennila and Surya gradually but ineluctably start to fall in love.

Real Vs Reel

Tamil TV serials have been condemned for their stereostypes, but new channels that emerge continue the tradition despite all the criticism. However, their appearance and feel seem to indicate startlingly comparable content. The conservative, probably high class, upper caste, family drama is the focus of the Hindi serials, which feature a sizable ensemble of performers

attempting to portray "genuine people." However, the HD displays have already established the standard for having individuals who are heavily coiffed, accessorised, and set in opulent environments. These serials have long been popular across all of India, and Tamil audiences have progressively come to appreciate them in dub variants. New television shows that romanticise village life (devoid of caste), feature stylish youths, large families, and old traditions and customs that demonstrate the importance of trust, commitment and love. It is swamped with many TV shows with repeat telecasts the whole day It is pathetic truth, but in this atmosphere, Tamil TV serials have begun to adopt the national fashion, abandoning the progressive fashion that marked their inception.Even the passive audience is impacted by serials.Contrary to past times, there are plenty of options available; the issue is a lack of complex or uplifting content.Tamil television reality programmes use unrealistic or undesirable showcase themes to build enthusiasm, which causes cultural imbalance in the viewers.These programmes have prewritten scripts that make the outcomes more dramatic and entice viewers to watch more (Arulchelvan, 2019)

Rousing Sexual Behaviour:

TV serial programs motivate awful dressing habits. Even in reality programs, women appear in awkward dresses. Female characters are portrayed in such a way exposing their body to the public. Research studies found that the most of the female celebrities in the drama serials are wears awkward dress. Even young girls and middle aged women are attracted by these dressing culture. These grubby dresses of celebrities induce sexual motivation which promotes to the unmanageable sexual life. This leads to social deprivation. In most of the occasions, children tries to act what they witness from these TV serials and programs.

Portrayal of Nuptial Relationship:

Teenagers of the present generations are prepared to do anything for getting love from opposite partners. The affection of parents and love towards them are seen less by the younger generation. In most of the Tamil TV serials, husband involve in illicit relationship with their female co-worker or with their ex-girl friend and wife connects relationship with other man.

These illegitimate relationships are portrayed graciously that both the couples involvement with others are justified. At the same time, it fails to highlight on the serious results of such relationship and how it destroys the family. Seeing such programs which has the subject of extra-marital affairs are seen very common among the viewers. Both boys and girls engaging in eve-teasing is also exaggerated in Tamil serials. The present young generation tries to apply it and enjoy very much.

In a study conducted by (Svendsen, 2011) found that the participants were more likely to believe TV portrays marriage in a negative tone and stylized manner. It is thought that TV portrays an exact representation of real life marriage and few watch for ideas on what marriage is like. Western trends and fashion attract the women. They are style conscious, love to flaunt the latest and love to experiment with clothes and latest trends.

Psychological effects of the viewers

In most of the popular Tamil TV serials, the portrayal of female ascertains that women are negative stereotypes and this tendency could set free the sociological havoc in the long term. Dr. Shalini, a notable physiatrist and consultant, opined that there is ample of evidences from Western studies about televised violence inspires actual domestic violence and such evil characters could become the role models for the less-educated or rural audience. Watching serials for a long time may disrupt biological pathways and affect the central nervous system as well

as increased prevalence of sleep disturbances. It may result in social solitude and withdrawal from interpersonal relationships. It can also have economic and societal implications.

Conclusion

Television and social media plays a significant role in telecasting changes among people. The need of thehour is to control its potential in the right direction or rather than let it be atrite reflection of society's lowest common denominator. TV programmes can be a valuable tool for generating awareness about the changing dynamics of society. Tamil TV serials and programs are not only wasting our priceless time and disrupting youngsters studies but also stimulating sexual behavior through pre and extra marital relationship, creating misunderstanding among family members plotting for criminal activity.etc. Further, it is commanding cultural interference which may spoil our rich cultural norms and values. This can be seen as source of social disorganization in semi –urban and rural background. To save our traditional culture and put an end to cultural attack, government should take severe initiatives to regulate such type of TV serials.

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